



PALGRAVE STUDIES IN PERFORMANCE AND MIGRATION



# European Theatre Migrants in the Age of Empire

Personal Experiences,  
Transnational Trajectories,  
and Socio-Political Impacts

*Edited by*  
Berenika Szymanski-Düll · Lisa Skwirblies

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# Palgrave Studies in Performance and Migration

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With the arrival of over a million refugees into Europe in 2015 and millions of displaced Ukrainians in 2022, the topic of migration has become a major source of public concern and discussion. However, migration is not a new or a local issue. From earliest recorded time, individuals and populations all over the world have migrated to achieve a better life or escape subjection and the threat of violence. The theatre has continually addressed this theme both in its dramaturgy and in its performance practices. Theatre artists have always striven to find new audiences, and the stories they have told have regularly dealt with the theme of migration. Through the centuries peripatetic artists have taken their work on the road in a variety of forms and manifestations such as pageant wagons, *commedia dell'arte*, touring shows, puppetry, opera, circus, dance, legitimate theatre and mixed media; while playwrights worldwide explored the pathos of the homeless, the excluded and the forcibly displaced to question the meaning of life. This series brings together a range of scholarship focusing on many eras of performance, as well as numerous geographical and social conditions to offer an understanding of the complexities of theatre and migration.

Berenika Szymanski-Düll • Lisa Skwirblies  
Editors

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During the development of this book, two of our authors, our beloved and respected colleagues, Prof. Jim Davis and Dr Sue-Anne Wallace, passed away unexpectedly. Jim was a leading and respected authority on nineteenth-century theatre and a kind and dedicated teacher and mentor. Sue-Anne had recently moved from art history to theatre history, undertaking a second PhD, examining the life of Walter Bentley. Jim's and Sue-Anne's death is a great loss for the international theatre research community.

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# Introduction

*Berenika Szymanski-Düll and Lisa Skwirbli*

In the current political climate with the rise of right-wing populist parties, migration, and particularly anti-immigration, has become a topic that can sway entire election outcomes and reignite heated discussions about European identity, European culture, and European values. Time and again, ‘Fortress Europe’<sup>1</sup> keeps finding new ways and reasons to restrict border crossings and outsource the quest for asylum of thousands of people to third-party countries. What is striking in these debates is that migration is often portrayed as an external force to Europe’s history, with Europe depicted as on the receiving end of large numbers of immigrants.

<sup>1</sup>The term ‘Fortress Europe’ is currently being used to describe immigration into the European Union and refers to attitudes towards immigration, the policies of border fortification or the increasing externalization of borders to prevent migrants from entering the European Union.

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This discourse overlooks the fact that throughout history Europeans themselves left the continent, and especially that their number grew sharply during the long nineteenth century, leading to what is now referred to as mass migration. There were a variety of reasons for this increase. In addition to advancements in transportation that allowed faster travel over longer distances, the expansion of transport networks and a policy of freedom of movement, which for a long time placed few restrictions on migration, economic, political, and social factors also played a significant role. Approximately 48 million emigrants left Europe during this time, mainly for the American continent, but also for Australia, and New Zealand (Massey 2000, 62). The transatlantic migration of the nineteenth century also formed part of European settler colonialism and includes the colonization of large parts of the world. In other words, for a long time in history, Europe was not the point of destination but the starting point for massive waves of emigration. Simultaneously, due to constantly changing geographical maps, revolutions, poverty, and religious persecution, large-scale migration was also taking place within Europe. For instance, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, migrants comprised between two-thirds and three quarters of the total population in almost all the larger and smaller cities of the Habsburg Empire (Hahn 2012, 22). This European history of migration, which is disregarded in current discussions, highlights the global historical entanglements within which Europe evolved, and challenges the myths about cultural homogeneity, racial and ethnic endogamy, and territorial rootedness that are feeding the current anxieties about immigration into the EU.

Another disregarded part of this history is that a large number of these nineteenth-century European emigrants were in fact theatre professionals. Although historical and sociological research has examined various professional groups of the period, such as housemaids or craftsmen, the group of migrants within the theatre of that period has not yet received sufficient attention. To date, their experiences, trajectories, and influences have remained a largely under-researched factor despite the fact that theatre in the nineteenth century was to a large extent defined by mobility. In other words, migration was a pressing matter amongst nineteenth-century European theatre practitioners that went far beyond the mere representation of migration on stage or the—at this time—popular phenomenon of touring. For thousands of European theatre makers, who decided to leave their home countries or even the continent to find new audiences and build new careers abroad, migration was a life-changing experience. Their

emigration, like that of all other migrants, was usually difficult, involved deprivation and in many cases was met with xenophobia in the countries of arrival. Social inequalities such as gender, race, age, religion, and sexuality intersected with the different statuses of their migration. More than a temporary stay in another country, theatre migrants had to shift their main place of residence and with that also the centre of their lives, frequently involving the transfer of whole families abroad. This often meant learning a new language, adapting to the aesthetic standards of the new home country, or starting whole careers and professions anew. Letters, diaries, and reviews talk about their struggles and successes, about rejections and acceptances, and about theatre histories of transnational mobility. For in many cases, these migrations sparked aesthetic and institutional innovations in the countries of arrival, entangled with local forms of performance and, in some cases, gave rise to entirely new modes of producing and watching theatre. In other cases, European theatre migrants acted as cultural agents of empire in the colonial settler communities and contributed to the popularization of colonial ideas and ideals and the eradication of indigenous performance cultures. It is safe to say that theatre migration influenced a European theatre modernity in intricate ways and affected the worldviews, self-images, and understandings of theatre of those who went through the process of migration.

It is this phenomenon—the European theatre migration of the long nineteenth century—that this volume seeks to address. It does so by examining on the one hand the multifaceted motivations, trajectories, and experiences of European theatre migrants. This means providing a better understanding of both the personal motivations and experiences of the migrant theatre makers as well as the wider relations of colonialism, political economy, and social inequalities, in which their migrations took place. On the other hand, this book examines the phenomenon of European theatre migration by investigating the cultural, social, and political impact and consequences that emigration has had on the local communities and on the cultural and theatrical practices in the countries of arrival. In many cases, the arrival of theatre migrants produced institutional and artistic innovations, built transnational networks, entangled with existing local forms of performance. In other cases, it triggered processes of friction between the locals and the immigrants, leading in some instances to theatre migrants being involved in coerced labour to fulfil European ambitions in Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

Reading European theatre migration as part of the ‘Age of Empire’ (Hobsbawm 1989) points to an understanding of Europe as deeply shaped by its imperial endeavours and the (im)mobility within. Sociologist Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, for example, suggests examining the question of whiteness in nineteenth-century transatlantic European migration to better understand the ‘coloniality’ of migration that forms the basis for today’s racializing migration policies and discourses (Rodríguez 2018, 194). She convincingly shows how migration policies were engineered and implemented first in countries transitioning from colonial rule to sovereign national power: ‘The first modern migration policies were developed in the late nineteenth century in North, Central, and South America, and in parts of the Caribbean. Guaranteeing the political, economic, and cultural influence of former colonial powers, migration policies established a set of instruments prioritizing the recruitment of white European migrants’ (196). In other words, one needs to understand nineteenth-century white European transatlantic migration as signalling the advent of racial capitalism constituting the nation-state’s rationale for racial coding in migrant labour recruitment policies (198). As some of the contributions in this book show, theatre played its own part in these racialized recruitment policies as theatre was not uncommonly also determined by a cultural and educational project of nation-building in these (former) colonies. Argentina, for instance, as the chapter by Kristen McCleary in this volume shows, actively promoted, and sought European immigration after the constitutional emancipation of its enslaved population in 1853 by partially covering the travel and transportation costs of white European migrants (Rodríguez 2018, 198). Similar processes can be described for places such as Brazil, Uruguay, and Cuba. The European theatre migrants arriving in these countries had to negotiate the logic of colonial difference and social classification based on racial hierarchies both on and off the theatre stage. Placing the phenomenon of theatre migration within an imperial framework thus means understanding the extent to which the governance of migration in one place has affected the mobility in another, and how this makes the politics of migration a dynamic and relational experience with profoundly unequal consequences across the globe (Carmel et al. 2021). Several of the contributions in this edited collection discuss theatre migration explicitly as part of the colonial project, while others focus more specifically on different forms of imperialism, the formation of settler communities, or processes of racialization and migrantization.

Hence, in placing European theatre migrations at the centre of this book, we do not aim to re-centre Europe. On the contrary, we hope to contribute with this volume to the many valuable attempts at decentring and ‘provincializing’ Europe (Chakrabarty 2009) that are currently under way in our discipline by telling a European theatre history that focuses on its migrantized and largely marginalized actors, and on North-South migration trajectories that disrupt the common current focus on South-North migration. Focusing on migration experiences and migration politics in only Northern contexts runs the risk of overlooking how globally entangled these experiences and politics have been, and how much networks and social institutions have shaped and were shaped by these experiences and politics of migration (Carmel et al. 2021). Centring on migration related to the theatre (in the widest understanding of the term) also means broadening a spatialized and geographic focus on migration, and shedding light on embodied experiences and negotiations of migration and mobility. With this in mind, we hope to contribute to an ecology of knowledge that challenges dominant conceptualizations of migration within our discipline of theatre historiography.

This also includes new methodological approaches for the study of both migration and theatre. In order to examine the phenomenon of migration, this volume does not focus on the analyses of productions, dramas, or aesthetic concepts that dominate the field of theatre studies research, but rather on the migrating individuals, their experiences, and their activities. Thus, most of the contributions in this volume follow a biographical approach. A biographical approach is by no means a detailed and fact-saturated reconstruction of (professional) *curricula vitae* or a reappraisal of individual biographies. Rather, a biographical approach to theatre history in the context of migration offers an epistemological surplus that makes it possible to re-centre previously marginal aspects and to rediscover actors who have been forgotten or marginalized in theatre historiography precisely because of their highly mobile lives (Szymanski-Düll 2020). As the essays in this book show, studying the biographies of theatre migrants in particular provides an opportunity to look at theatre history explicitly from the perspective of mobility, inviting us to see it from a perspective beyond sedentariness and narrow-minded local or national viewpoints. Furthermore, the biographical approach also allows us to explore what the sociologist Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka has called ‘constellations of multiple belonging’ (2013, 12), which challenge those approaches in the study of migration that generalize migrants as homogeneous groups.

Thus, analysing migratory activities and experiences in the context of global historical entanglements, the contributions in this book also perform a critical break with established approaches relying on the frameworks of ‘state’ and ‘nation’. By framing European theatre migration as a transnational phenomenon, all contributions disrupt the conceptual framing of the nation-state as the standard unit of analysis. In their edited collection *Migration—Changing Concepts, Critical Approaches* (2018), Doris Bachmann-Medick and Jens Kugele argue for a ‘methodological transnationalism’ (2). In this context, they also point out that a simple transition from ‘national’ to ‘transnational’, however, does not suffice to capture concrete migratory encounters and experiences. This is also true for the study of theatre migration, where especially the individual experiences and trajectories of migration have not yet been taken seriously as sources for theatre history. Our edited collection addresses this lack by focusing on both critically discussing specific historical case studies of individual migratory experiences and reflecting upon larger overarching policies, norms, and practices of migration as a basis for analysing theatre migration processes. As Bachmann-Medick and Kugele argue, this requires—beyond transnational approaches—also other frameworks, such as group formation and network-building (2).

The present volume is only the beginning of what is a very rich field of theatre migration in the nineteenth century. In order to address it in its complexity, we invited a broad range of theatre scholars from several countries and backgrounds to consider the phenomenon of European theatre migration through their own historical research foci. The contributions therefore represent a variety of perspectives, methodologies, and theatrical genres that allow us to demonstrate the complex nature of theatre migration in the timeframe on which we are focusing. The chapters of this volume range from conceptual and methodological considerations, tracing migration routes, and studying individual case studies of particular actors, playwrights, and theatre makers migrating from Europe to the Americas, the African and Asian continent, as well as migration trajectories between European countries to the building of transnational networks, the establishment of whole new theatrical genres, and the role of (white European) theatre migrants in processes such as nation-building, imperial expansionism, and settler colonialism. The organizing framework for all contributions is a conceptual-analytical one in order to avoid the trap of centring geographical and thus national narratives of theatre migration. We have therefore identified four key dimensions of theatre migration that

we assume relevant for this book while recognizing that they represent only a cross section of possible research agendas/aspects.

The first section, titled ‘On the Route: Histories, Historiographies, and Concepts’, consists of three articles that explore concepts and historiographical aspects of the relationship between nineteenth-century theatre and migration, taking into account theatre’s practical, political and social conditions of the time. In her opening chapter, Berenika Szymanski-Düll explores notions of migration and mobility, arguing that neither is sufficient to capture the lived experiences of theatre professionals of the highly mobile nineteenth-century theatre. She therefore proposes the concept ‘theatre migrant’, which she elaborates by examining the mobile biographies of European-born theatre professionals. The theatre migrant concept, she argues, not only articulates a unique historical phenomenon, it also illustrates that different forms of mobility need to be distinguished within the broader discourse on migration. In this context, she identifies the variety of reasons for theatre migration, emphasizing the complex interplay of individual motivations, structural factors, and external influences.

The chapter by Martina Groß intervenes in current theatre historiographical research by discussing the potential of travelogues as sources for historical migration research, and especially so for feminist historical migration research. The travelogues of three European female theatre migrants—Juliane Déry, Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück, and Flora Tristan—allow her to critically assess the gender-related impacts of mobility and migration experiences within the European theatre world of the nineteenth century and to point out how the marginalization of travel literature in theatre history relates to the absences of migrating women and their testimonies in archives of theatre histories.

Nineteenth-century Poland is a particularly interesting case for challenging concepts of migration that are bound to the concepts of ‘state’ and ‘nation’, as Dorota Jarzabek-Wasył shows in her chapter that concludes the first part. Due to the fact that Poland as a nation did not exist in the territory of a single state for multiple decades, the mobility of Polish theatre makers across the Russian, Austrian, and Prussian partitions needs a different framework than conventional theatre historiographies suggest. Travelling from Kraków to Poznań before the First World War, for instance, meant not only crossing geopolitical borders but also grappling with cultural and linguistic borders. In order to fathom the complexity of this specific mobility, Jarzabek-Wasył suggests the concept ‘sub-migration’.



Sub-migration denotes mobility not only in relation to space but also in relation to a mobility of belonging. As she shows, most of these Polish theatre emigrants of the nineteenth century engaged in forms of multiple belonging across visible and invisible borders of the so-called *kordon*.

The second part of this book, 'Theatre Migration in the Wake of Settler Colonialism', asks how theatre-making in the long nineteenth century was influenced by migration that took place along the routes of empire and within the European imperial project of settler colonialism. The chapters of Priyanka Basu, Sue-Anne Wallace, and Lisa Skwirblies therefore look at theatre migration through the analytical framework of colonial mobility. Priyanka Basu starts this section with a close critical look at the writings of Joachim Hayward Stocqueler, a European prolific traveller, writer, and theatre enthusiast. His plays, memoirs, travelogues, and other writings, as Basu argues, can help us form a better understanding of how early English theatres in cities like Bombay and Calcutta were developed until the formal establishment of indigenous Indian national theatres in the mid-nineteenth century. With a focus on print history, Basu thus shows how colonial mobility and theatre impacted on each other. Her chapter, moreover, proposes a 'liquescent approach' to theatre history that challenges the more common place-centric discourse in transnational theatre historiography and takes into account the multifarious journeys of Europeans and their influences on the material and symbolic existence of theatre in the colonies.

In the following chapter, Sue-Anne Wallace takes up the notion of colonial mobility and sheds light on the migration routes to Australia of the Scottish actor Walter Bentley, who also happens to be her grandfather. Critically exploring her family archive, Wallace reflects in a broader manner on the history of Australian society through imperial and migration history. Through a biographical approach, Wallace offers an insight into the interpersonal connections, everyday practices, and often chance encounters through which the Scottish theatre diaspora was established in Australia. The chapter, moreover, comments on the ambiguous role the Scottish diaspora played within the larger imperial attempt of transporting Britishness to the Australasian colonies.

In her chapter, Lisa Skwirblies focuses on the theatre practices of German settlers in the former colony German South-West Africa as well as on a repertoire of dance performances by African labour migrants in the same geopolitical context. The critical discussion of the two performance repertoires shows how two very different groups of migrants used the

theatre as a means to negotiate discourses and policies of race and citizenship in the colonial context that even influenced policy making in the metropole. Skwirblies argues with this chapter for writing the histories of theatre migration from less obvious theatre historical archival sources, namely those of the colonial administration, the colonial police, and colonial tax office. These sources show us how concepts such as ‘culture’ and ‘emigration’ functioned in tandem with military and economic supremacy in the colonies and how theatre and performance were means to both underline and undermine this imperial discourse on race and citizenship.

In the third part of this volume, entitled ‘Imagined Communities, Migratory Networks, and Spaces of Negotiation’, each of the three contributions approaches the phenomenon of theatre migration by focusing on the interplay between migration and community formation. In her contribution, Danijela Weber-Kapusta looks at the establishment and widespread distribution of professional German-language theatres in the Crown Lands of the Habsburg Empire. She argues that the cultural asymmetries and hierarchies between the German culture and the national cultures were a particular feature of the Habsburg Monarchy and that the long-standing dominance of German-language theatre in the area was a result of internal colonization. Weber-Kapusta shows how the migration of German-speaking theatre makers functioned as an instrument of cultural assimilation in the process of emerging national theatres which first had to build their audiences and to prove their artistic power.

Rikard Hoogland’s article takes us to Scandinavia and shows, through the biographies of the migrants Ernst Ahlbom and Karin Swanström, how this region, along with its theatre practices, was both transnational and at the same time characterized by nation-building efforts. Focusing on Finland, Hoogland tackles the question of stage language and demonstrates how theatre has served as a vital instrument in the advancement of nation-building and the shaping of national identities.

With a focus on the migration patterns of theatre artists in the Austrian crown lands of Bohemia, Galicia, and Banat between 1848 and 1859, Jorit Hopp addresses the issue of staff recruitment. Arguing that employing network research methods is a crucial tool for a better understanding of labour migration, in his contribution he presents three hypotheses, and elaborates, among others, the relationships between the human actors and between the places.

Finally, the concluding section, ‘Migration Trajectories and Transnational Lifeworlds’, is dedicated to focusing on specific theatre

migrants and their various migration trajectories. In doing so, the articles reveal lives on the move as well as different migration stories, through which they demonstrate the potentials but also the pitfalls of migration. In her chapter, Kristen McCleary follows the migration routes of the Millanes Sisters from Barcelona to Buenos Aires and discusses their individual and especially gendered experiences as female theatre migrants in the larger framework of Spanish colonial history in Latin America. McCleary frames the performances of the Millanes Sisters as an example of soft diplomacy within Spanish-Argentinian relations of the nineteenth century and shows how the Spanish community used the theatre to exercise its influence over its former colony.

The contribution of Karolina Prykowska-Michalak focuses on the migration trajectories of Ryszard Ordyński across Europe and the United States. Prykowska-Michalak uses Ordyński's particular transnational biography to show how mobility and migration can lead to erasure in the theatre historiographies of the country of origin. While Ordyński's international career as a director benefitted from his emigration, the Polish theatre scene at the time as well as the Polish history books today erased him from their memory.

In the concluding chapter, Ruthie Abeliovich traces the migration routes and the career of Moyshe Hurwitz, a migrant from Eastern Europe, to show how modern Yiddish theatre evolved vis-à-vis the turn-of-the-century Jewish mass migration movement. Hurwitz's theatre, as Abeliovich explores, not only mirrored the experiences of the migratory community in New York, but also functioned as a symbolic and physical theatrical gesture, creating a sense of home for Jewish migrants and facilitating participation in community-building processes. Abeliovich argues that 'wandering Jewish performers' transfigured in the course of the nineteenth-century theatre mobility into modern-theatre transmigrants, travelling back and forth between continents, connecting Jewish diasporas under a shared repertoire.

This edited collection is the first comprehensive historical study that addresses the phenomenon of European theatre migration in the nineteenth century as an integral part of theatre history. What the book aims to show is that European theatre migration in the long nineteenth century was much more common than theatre historiography has so far given it credit for. Rather than understanding theatre migrants as a homogeneous group, the contributions in this volume argue for an approach that complicates our understanding of theatre migration by focusing on both

individual experiences of mobility and multiple belonging, as well as collective forms of mobility that were part of, and in some cases the engine of, a larger European imperial and colonial framework.

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PART I

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On the Route: Histories,  
Historiographies, and Concepts



# Defining the *Theatre Migrant*: A Concept Developed Through the Lens of Nineteenth-Century Theatre Practices

*Berenika Szymanski-Düll*

Movement from one place to another is one of the constants in the history of humanity or, as the migration historian Klaus Bade formulated it, the ‘*conditio humana*’ (2000, 11),<sup>1</sup> because migration is an essential ability that human beings have for adapting to different circumstances. The word *migration* is etymologically derived from the Latin word *migrare*, which can be translated as ‘to wander, to move away or out and to change residence’. This broad translation does not precisely define the temporal, spatial, or object-related characteristics of migration, meaning that ultimately anything that is in motion can be related to the term.

<sup>1</sup>For an overview of the global history of migration, see, for instance, Dirk Hoerder. 2002. *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millennium*, Durham: Duke University Press, or Immanuel Ness et al. (eds). 2013. *The Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration*, vol. 1–5, Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.

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In the past decades, the meaning of the term *migration* has undergone a huge differentiation and has become so complex that, as the sociologist Franck Düvell states, there is no one single definition of migration (2006, 6). Some academics consider any kind of mobility—regardless of its temporal dimension and geographic distance—as migration, while others, such as the sociologist Annette Treibel, define the term more narrowly and hold that the mere fact of being on the move is not sufficient to be subsumed under the category of migration (2008, 295).<sup>2</sup> In light of the highly mobile nineteenth-century theatre practices, that are the subject of this anthology, the question for me is therefore: What does migration really mean, particularly against the background of these various mobile practices? In this chapter, I examine these questions and introduce the concept of a *theatre migrant*, which is based on an analysis of the biographies and mobility experiences of European-born actors.

## MIGRATION AND GUEST PERFORMANCES

Defining it as a special form of human mobility, current definitions of migration largely agree that one aspect of migration involves crossing a political and legal border, and a second, related aspect is that this crossing is accompanied by a change in the place of residence and thus the centre of the person's life (Düvell 2006, 5; Hahn 2012, 25). The *Glossary on Migration* from the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), for example, defines a migrant as 'a person, who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across international borders' (132). This definition includes both internal migration—migration within a country—and international migration. In the latter case, migration takes place across national borders and corresponds to the conventional understanding of migration as either emigrating from a country of origin or immigrating to a country of destination.

In addition to these definitions, we need to consider the experienced reality of the migrants themselves. The migration researcher Jochen Oltmer, for instance, reminds us of the 'far-reaching implications' that migration has for the lives of migrants. As he points out, migrants must 'deal with economic realities and financial systems, cultural models and

<sup>2</sup> A comparable observation can be made in theatre studies research. For an overview of the wide range of uses of the term migration, see, for example, the comprehensive *Handbook of Theatre and Migration* edited by Yana Meerzon and Steven E. Wilmer (2023).

social norms and structures', which may differ significantly from those of their place of origin and thus impact their lives (Oltmer 2017, 20). The implications Oltmer identifies find empirical support in William Isaac Thomas and Florian Znaniecki's seminal text *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* from 1918/20. These sociologists have comprehensively researched the lives and experiences of Polish migrants in the United States and show, for example, that for those involved, migration is frequently experienced as a crisis experience, in which objective circumstances conflict with subjective expectations and in which migrants must actively balance and accept feeling increasingly distanced and remove from their culture of origin while at the same time creating a new feeling of belonging (Thomas and Znaniecki 1918–1920).

Applying these three criteria to individuals who work in the field of theatre, I propose the term *theatre migrant* and define it—in a first step—as an individual who crosses a political and legal border, who changes her or his place of residence, and who experiences the far-reaching implications of this move. An important aspect of this term is that it does not distinguish between those individuals who migrated as adults and those who migrated as children, and (somewhat paradoxically, but clarified below) the theatre need not necessarily be the reason these individuals migrated.<sup>3</sup> Although this first basic definition may initially seem plausible, the circumstances of artists' migration as it relates to theatre practice and their ideas about life are more complex. Therefore, the term *theatre migrant* needs to be further differentiated for the context of the nineteenth century.

If migration is understood to be a relocation and a departure with concomitant far-reaching biographical consequences, an act that is connected with giving up the previous place of residence and finding a new one, then this firstly results in a clear differentiation from another concept of mobility, namely travel. As the historian Sylvia Hahn states: 'In contrast to migration, a trip is a temporary (leisure) stay in another region [...]' (2012, 26). The distinguishing characteristics of a trip are thus a short-term change of place while retaining the political and legal place of residence and maintaining the existing life, work, and living conditions. This distinction is also found in definitions of transnational and socio-political organizations such as the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which states, 'Temporary travel abroad for purposes of

<sup>3</sup> I deal with the reasons for migration in more detail in the 'Reasons' section.



recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage does not change a person's country of usual residence' (UN DESA 1998, 9). As for the theatre, these definitions have relevance because one must differentiate between actors who migrate and actors who travel for a tour or guest performance. The *Allgemeines Theater-Lexikon* from 1846, for example, clarifies the differences as they relate to actors' contracts: 'If an actor in the predefined repertoire has several free days, he may, without compromising the terms of his employment, use these free days for performances on other stages that are connected to his place of residence by railways' ('Gastrollen' 1846, 6). In addition to being particularly popular in Europe, such guest performances were an important supplement to actors' incomes, especially in the break between seasons. The actress Auguste Baison-Hofmann (1846–1916), for instance, took advantage of guest performances for this purpose, writing that '[w]hen the season in Petersburg was over, the director of the theatre in Dorpat [...] invited me for a guest performance. Enticed by his promises of a large sum of roubles, I followed his call and set off. It was the height of summer [...].' Nor did these performances affect her regular employment: 'You may be aware that I gave many guest performances throughout Germany while I was employed at the Imperial German Court Theatre in Petersburg' (Baison-Hofmann 1906, 7). As these sources make clear, a guest performance is one in which guest performers temporarily change their location, with the assumption that they will return to their place of residence and continue performing at the venue at which they are employed. Although a guest performance, as the quotations listed here illustrate, can also be classed within the field of mobility, it must be differentiated from travel for recreation because it is for professional purposes. It is a temporary stay mostly of a few days or weeks in another region while the actual employment contract at the existing place of residence remains in force.

Thus, it can be argued that guest performances are short-term changes of location that do not affect an actor's actual political and legal place of residence, home, or residency status. Short journeys such as these, even if they are repeated and go beyond national borders, therefore do not fall under the concept *migration*, as defined here. This leads to the question of how to understand actors' stays away from their home for several months to pursue their career.

## LABOUR MIGRATION AND LABOUR MOBILITY

Advances and inventions in the field of transportation—especially the establishment of railways and steamships—gave theatre artists the opportunity to travel well beyond their immediate surroundings: If, up to the first half of the nineteenth century, travelling actors on the European continent could only move from place to place, mostly on foot or only by means of an animal and cart, the scale and frequency of theatre makers' mobility has increased dramatically over time, particularly since the second half of the century. As historical sources show, theatre makers took advantage of these opportunities for mobility in strikingly varied ways, even actors now long forgotten and who were far from being big stars. In his preface to Daniel Bandmann's travel memoir *An Actor's Tour: Or, Seventy Thousand Miles with Shakespeare*, Bernard Gisby writes: 'To-day every one is a traveler; many have made the circuit of the world' (1885, v). And so it was. Also, Bandmann was indeed a highly mobile actor: born in Kassel in 1837, he toured many regions of the world, and in analysing his memoirs, it is clear that he must have spent more than four years on tour. He left San Francisco on 2 August 1879 on the steamship *Australia*, bound for Sydney (Bandmann 1885, 5), and toured through Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, India, China, Singapore, and Hawaii. It was not until the end of January 1884 that he returned to San Francisco. In describing his long journey and return home, Bandmann recalls: 'On twenty-first of January, we left Honolulu, and after a rough journey of seven days arrived at San Francisco; [...] having traveled during that period upward of seventy thousand miles by land and sea, and having nearly seven hundred nights' (Bandmann 1885, 303).

Bandmann's example draws attention to an apparently obvious fact that has not been sufficiently discussed so far: The fact that a large number of stage artists were almost permanently on the move, rushing non-stop from town to town and country to country, from one performance to the next. One reason for this mobility was to satisfy the insatiable demand for entertainment, as theatre was a mass medium at the time, attracting diverse audiences and satisfying various expectations of entertainment through its variety of forms. Another reason was to establish or cement careers or simply to earn money, because although life on tour was strenuous, it was certainly lucrative for some (Szymanski-Düll 2022).

According to IOM, people who leave their home for professional reasons fall into the category 'labour migration', defined as 'the movement of

persons from their home State to another State for the purpose of employment' (2019, 123). In this context, such an individual, who moves for work to a country other than the one in which they were born or of which they are a national, is termed a *migrant worker* and defined as follows in article 2 of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families: '[a] person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national' (1990, 2). Migrant workers are further classified according to different types of labour migration. For our purposes, two of these classifications are of particular interest: *seasonal workers* and *itinerant workers*. The former is 'a migrant worker whose work by its character is dependent on seasonal conditions and is performed only during part of the year' (1990, 2). An example is numerous Italian or Spanish workers who went to South America during the cold season to work on plantations and returned to their homeland during the summer months. European actors followed this seasonal pattern as well, with opera singers, dancers, and other artists using the opposite part of the year for their work outside Europe to stick with the example of the Southern Hemisphere: While many European theatres took a break during the summer months, theatre artists performed during the winter high season in South America. This type of temporary labour migration is similar to people who fall under the category of *itinerant workers*, which is defined as follows: 'The term "itinerant worker" refers to a migrant worker who, having his or her habitual residence in one State, has to travel to another State or States for short periods, owing to the nature of his or her occupation' (1990, 3). While the two are similar, *seasonal workers* leave their home country only seasonally and, during their stay, generally remain in one place in the destination country, whereas *itinerant workers* are often on the road for longer periods of time and move from one place to another, staying only for a short time in each place. Thus, theatre artists who are on tour, as the example of Bandmann illustrates, correspond to precisely this second type. Not for nothing are travelling theatre artists included in the term *itinerant theatre*.

If one considers the two definitions of *seasonal worker* and *itinerant worker* more closely, one further important aspect is striking: Despite the specific differences, what both types of workers have in common is that their lives are tethered to the country of their birth or the country that they choose as their habitual residence. *Seasonal workers* generally return home after they have completed the seasonal work, while *itinerant workers*

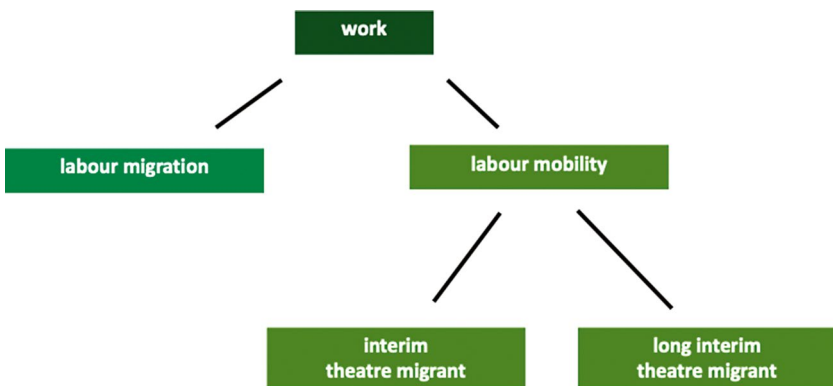
maintain their place of residence and intend to return after a certain period of work. Both forms, I contend, are captured by the term *labour mobility*:

The term ‘labour mobility’ has the same meaning as ‘labour migration’ but is more frequently used nowadays to reflect the dynamic and multi-directional nature of modern migration, indicating that those who move for employment purposes may do so more than once, may move across different countries of destination and that their employment abroad may not necessarily result in settlement in another country, keeping their prime place of residence in their country of origin. (IOM 2019, 123)

It is striking that the term *labour mobility* is described here as a contemporary phenomenon to reflect the dynamic and multidimensional character of modern migration for the purpose of employment. However, such work-related relocations across national borders were already a regular feature of nineteenth-century theatre. Furthermore, in terms of migration, this definition of labour mobility explicitly states that being employed abroad does not necessarily mean that an individual will settle in the country where she or he works; an individual’s prime place of residence continues to be his or her country of origin. Since a key aspect of the *migrant workers* category is precisely that to whom this classification applies also retain their home-country residence, the term *labour mobility*, as I see it, can also be applied to touring theatre. Theatre artists on tour do not migrate in the conventional sense; that is, they do not give up their primary place of residence and establish a new one. Their stays are only temporary, and they intend to return to their primary residence. The actress Franziska Ellmenreich (1847–1931) exemplifies this type of temporary mobility. In 1882, Ellmenreich left behind ‘a new home and a young baby’ for several months during her first guest performances in the United States but had no intention of giving them up either; instead, she planned to return home after her tour (Ellmenreich 1906, 69). This highlights a crucial fact that I would use to distinguish between *labour migration* and *labour mobility* in relation to nineteenth-century theatre: A key difference is that while *labour migration*, corresponding to the definition of migration formulated at the beginning of this article, is associated with relocating one’s primary place of residence for a certain period of time—either temporarily or permanently, including their home and centre of their life—*labour mobility* does not necessarily imply such a relocation and therefore has a more dynamic character.

However, while there are fine and important distinctions between *labour migration* and *labour mobility*, it is important to stress that it is not always possible to draw a hard line separating the two that applies in all cases. Thus, for instance, it is not possible to give a general answer as to whether *seasonal workers* and *itinerant workers* from the field of theatre did give up their homes in their native countries during their temporary stays, finding a new home and settling there in a specific place at least for a certain period. Each biography is unique and must be investigated closely on a case-by-case basis. For, as numerous sources document, many theatre artists who carried out guest performances seasonally did not necessarily stay in one place, but instead travelled from town to town or even country to country, slept in hotels or even in the mode of transport by which they travelled and thus also mutated into *itinerant workers*. Because of these fine distinctions, and the overlap and difficulty in clear demarcation, I argue that *itinerant workers* and *labour mobility* need to be combined with the new term *interim theatre migrants* more accurately. The word *interim* here reflects these artists' reality of fluid mobility, in which they are neither fixed nor rooted to a specific place, but instead are in a state of continuous movement, even if only for a short time (Fig. 1).

Yet *interim theatre migrants* can also become *long-term interim theatre migrants*, in which mobility becomes for them a way of life. This can be seen, for instance, in the biographies of many opera singers, whose labour mobility was so strongly pronounced that—as theatre historian Agata Łuksza noted using the example of Gemma Bellincioni



**Fig. 1** Differentiation between work-related migration and mobility, by Berenika Szymanski-Düll

(1864–1950)—one can no longer say where her home was or that her home had a purely symbolic role.<sup>4</sup> However, the example of Bellincioni, in my opinion, illustrates another feature, that is that many *interim theatre migrants* can absolutely also be called *theatre migrants* because they relocated the centre of their life and thus also their place of residence to another country once or even several times during the course of their lives. Bellincioni, for instance, was born in Monza, lived in Berlin from 1911 to 1915, and then moved to the Netherlands, before finally returning to Italy, where she died in 1950 in Naples. Another example is Daniel Bandmann mentioned above: by emigrating to the United States in 1852 he can be termed a *theatre migrant* as well.

### FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES

In this context, we should also remember the aspect of far-reaching implications, which was defined as the third important aspect for migration and is significant in the context of the comments made so far. The autobiographical sources of theatre migrants reveal that the process of migration posed many challenges for the migrants. The actress Marie Geistering (1836–1903), for instance, states: ‘but it is a big decision to cross the ocean, settle in a foreign world and exchange that to which we are long accustomed for the new and the foreign’ (1883, 8). Her words clearly show that migration involves a rupture, a life change that is associated with consequences. Relocating one’s centre of life means grappling with cultures that are initially foreign, being subject to administrative regulations that are unfamiliar, facing institutional and financial realities that are new and, in most cases, having to live and work in a foreign language. In many ways and for many theatre migrants, migration means starting over. Many migrants experience othering, discrimination, and privation, all of which have a far-reaching impact on their lives, thoughts, and actions. In her memoirs, for example, the actress Helena Modrzejewska (1840–1909) (also known as Helena Modjeska), who left Poland with friends in 1876 to emigrate to the United States, impressively describes how she and her group of friends suffered from the lack of space in their housing in Anaheim, bemoaning the new day-to-day life abroad where the Polish intellectuals were doing manual labour. She writes:

<sup>4</sup>I am referring here to the research presented by Agata Łuksza at a workshop held in Warsaw on 24 and 25 May 2023 under the auspices of the T-MIGRANTS project.

Several weeks elapsed since our establishment in Anaheim. I noticed that my husband grew despondent and unusually nervous, and I also began to feel restless, and at moments felt a sort of pang around my heart. Madame Sypniewska looked like the globe of a lamp, pale and transparent, and her large eyes grew larger and larger, and were often fixed on some distant object, looking but not seeing; her husband had sometimes a gloomy expression on his face and walked with his head down, grumbling and slapping his little boy for relief. [...] and one evening we came across Paprocki leaning against a tree and crying. We realized that we were all homesick. (Modjeska 1910, 291)

The experiences of Modrzejewska indicate just how migration differs from mobility. In the process of *labour mobility*, the protagonists also encounter foreign languages and new cultural realities, but because these are temporary and the individuals are aware that their stay in the country or town where they are performing is only limited, they always have a way out, the option to return home. Franziska Ellmenreich, for example, passed up an offer to tour Australia directly after her guest performances in the United States because she was too homesick:

When I now received an offer to tour the cities of Australia with my ensemble for 20 weeks, I had to decline despite the splendid prospects; I had been seized by morbid homesickness since that German Maria Stuart act—homesickness for Germany, for my child, for the art of my homeland far from the profane chasing of dollars. It was certainly not wise—but—I had to!

And so I crossed the ocean back to my home with a light heart. (1906, 73)

Migrants, by contrast, must learn to come to terms with homesickness and their new living conditions. Many often do not have the option of returning. Even if they want to, political or financial circumstances often do not allow them to go home. Migrants also differ from labour mobility actors on tour in that the latter, according to sources, often found time to sight-see—if the tightly packed tour schedules and, of course, their financial situation allow. In other words, many had time to be typical tourists. For instance, a report in the *New York Times* on the occasion of the guest performance of Max Reinhardt's *Sumurun* in 1912 in the United States reads: 'Neither Fraulein Konstantin nor Frau von Buelow have had time to see much of New York yet. They are planning a trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and to Chinatown, where the young lady hopes to pick up some Japanese prints [...]' ('A Chat with Fraulein Konstantin: Leading

Actress of “Sumurun” 1912, X7). In contrast, for many migrants, such tourist activities were privileges that were not a priority after arriving in a new country.

## REASONS

A natural question when examining migration is understanding why individuals migrate in the first place. For decades, researchers have studied this question, and they have formulated various explanations, concepts, and theories. A model that has been prevalent since the 1960s argues that migration can be explained by push and pull factors. This model assumes that in their region of origin, people face certain basic conditions that *push* them away, while in so-called immigration regions, certain factors attract migrants (*pull them*). However, this model is now increasingly called into question by various parties because it simplifies the complexity of migration processes. Thus, more recent concepts talk less about clearly definable push and pull factors and argue that *migration drivers*—structural components that favour or limit individual freedom of action and freedom of choice on migration—make a decision to migrate more or less likely. This research explains that underlying factors trigger migration, including economic, political, social, cultural, demographic and ecological ones (Czaika and Reinprecht 2022). Thus, migration may take place due to persecution and wars, but it may also be driven by forced resettlement, economic hardship, or environmental factors such as natural disasters. On the other hand, migration may be motivated by possibilities for further education, by employment or by career opportunities. Current theories agree that migration is always context-dependent. Consequently, the interplay of factors and the configuration of complex parameters that ultimately influence the migration outcome are very specific to the time and place in which migration decisions are made (Czaika and Reinprecht 2022, 51). Thus, migration cannot only be attributed to external factors but must always be viewed in interaction with individual motives. With this in mind, I turn now to examining biographies to reveal which migration factors have influenced theatre migrants.

Unsurprisingly, one of the first and most significant reasons theatre professionals migrate is for work. In the nineteenth century, contracts were short and venue bookings and leases were permanently changing—many often for only a season—which meant that the theatre profession, particularly for actors, was per se mobile, and migration—especially



internal migration—was a common phenomenon. Actors, therefore, often moved from one place to another each season, depending on their contract. International migration also played a significant role in this context, and particularly the many job opportunities in North America attracted numerous actors across the ocean. An editor of *Scribner's Monthly*, a US magazine, noted in February 1881 that ‘this willingness of ours to welcome the wandering stars of the stage is known to all foreign actors and actresses of celebrity’ and stressed not only the high potential earnings for European actors in the United States, but also the fact that many of those who originally only came for a guest performance ultimately emigrated to the country (‘Foreign Actors on the American Stage’ 1881, 521–534).

This appeal of the United States for actors was part of a general trend of transatlantic mass movements at the time: many Europeans left the continent to seek out the numerous job opportunities there that were rare on their own continent at that time. Because of these economic motivations for emigrating to the United States, Klaus Bade and Jochen Oltmer describe those Europeans as ‘economic migrants’ and state: ‘This eminently positive term described those highly productive commercially focused and success-oriented immigrants who were welcome in the United States’ (2004, 8). This description also applies to the theatre business of the time, since, during the period under study, for many European theatre makers, as personal testimonials document, migration to the United States was certainly linked to material considerations.

As individual biographies show, though, not every migrant was motivated by work or for economic reasons; even for those individuals who migrated several times in their life, they did so for different reasons. Heinrich Börnstein (1805–1892) is a case in point. One motivation for his numerous migrations was his voluntary decision to advance his education and to have greater opportunities for professional advancement; other reasons were compulsory: war, his own political activities and, to some extent, financial hardship forced him to relocate the centre of his life. At the age of eight, he fled together with his parents and his brother to Lviv, away from the war-like conditions in Hamburg, the town of his birth, during the French period. He describes these reasons in his memoirs:

These horrific circumstances and the prospect that even more terrible days of misery and danger would follow, since Napoleon was, at that time, still in possession of his full power, caused my father to make the decision to leave Hamburg and to seek a new home in a more peaceful place. (Börnstein 1881, vol. 1, 20)

Leaving Hamburg at that time, however, was extremely difficult because one needed permission from the French authorities. Although Börnstein's father succeeded in obtaining a passport for himself and his wife—issued by the 'Police generale de l'Empire' and only valid for six months—on the basis of a doctor's note recommending a cure in Bohemia, the children were not entered as fellow travellers by the authorities and 'were to stay behind with relations as a guarantee for the return of the parents' (Börnstein 1881, vol. 1, 21). Since their intention was to escape and not to return, Börnstein's parents were not willing to accept this condition and they devised an alternative plan to ultimately get their two sons, Heinrich and Arnold,<sup>5</sup> out of Hamburg on 8 July 1813. As Börnstein recalls:

We two boys [...] were apparently accompanying our parents to the harbour; but we had barely arrived, and everything was ready for departure when the old skipper suddenly made us disappear into his roomy ship's chest, quickly closed the lid, sat on it, and grasped the rudder, while his three sons started to row strenuously. There was some bedding in the chest, at the back of which a large airhole had been cut out, and we boys, who had been pulled from our beds before dawn and who were therefore still very drowsy, instantly fell asleep in the chest. Only after a long while, after the fearful trembling of our parents and only when we had left Hamburg and the French guardship on the Elbe—where we were called to heave to and show the passport—when we had left the next imminent danger far, far behind us, only then were we children fetched out of the chest by our worried mother [...]. (1881, vol. 1, 24)

Thirty years later, Börnstein had other reasons for migrating, this time to the United States. Living in France at the time, he sympathized with the 1848 revolution, and to avoid imprisonment, he decided to leave Europe and relocate to the United States.

As was the case with many migrants, Börnstein's example shows how difficult it can be to unambiguously differentiate between *voluntary* and *forced* migration, a difference the research literature repeatedly refers to. In many cases, making such distinctions is not possible. The political dimension between these definitions is frequently unbalanced, because while *forced* migration is often easier to determine because it is politically

<sup>5</sup> Heinrich Börnstein's brother Arnold Bernhard Karl Börnstein was born in Hamburg on 7 April 1808.

defined—that is, its causes can be traced to the behaviour of third parties—*voluntary* migration is often robbed of its political dimension, as Frank Düvell points out, because in most cases the agents behind such a migration remain hidden. In fact, some cases can also be viewed as involuntary because migrants are not the sole cause of the circumstances responsible for their migration (Düvell 2006, 18). Börnstein's migration to Lviv, for example, resulted on the one hand from the war-like conditions in Hamburg, while on the other, it represented a conscious decision by his parents to liberate the family from this dangerous situation. Similarly, Börnstein's decision to emigrate to the United States can be seen as forced—leaving Europe for political reasons—while at the same time this decision can be seen as voluntarily taking advantage of an opportunity to avoid imprisonment.

These multiple motivations are found repeatedly in the migration trajectories of individuals from the theatre. However, when examining biographies of theatre migrants, we can add another observation to those already mentioned, namely that there can be multiple causes for a single migration. The migration researchers Mathias Czaika and Constantin Reinprecht also state: '[a]t specific moments in people's lives a number of factors come together and stimulate migration intentions, which [...] may end up in temporary or permanent moves to another domestic or international destination' (2022, 49). Helena Modrzejewska is a good example of someone who had several reasons for emigrating. Reviewing preserved documents and sources in the archives reveals that no one reason alone can explain why she left her native country—rather, there were many reasons. According to the actress' correspondence and several letters of her husband Karol Chłapowski, one of the reasons Modrzejewska emigrated was her long-held desire to make a debut abroad and to perform onstage in a foreign language. In a letter to her friend Stefania Leo written after she had departed, the actress admitted: 'That was my secret plan from the beginning' (Modrzejewska [1877] 2015, 368). She kept this plan secret which was due to the fact that she could not be certain of being able to practise her profession in the United States, let alone being successful there. Because she was well-known in her homeland, Modrzejewska was afraid of being publicly humiliated if she should fail. Additionally, she was still under contract with the Warsaw Theatre, which she did not want to give up for reasons of security in order to have a plan B in the case that she failed abroad. For this reason, she just took a one-year break from performing at the Warsaw Theatre, asserting even when she was already in the

United States, that she would return to Warsaw (Modrzejewska [1876b] 2015, 323).

In addition, as a well-known actress, she had become a target of growing criticism and envy, which included numerous attacks, as she writes in her biography:

In every artistic career and especially when one has attained a high position, one is bound to meet with jealousy. [...] One of those is a special form of meanness which our great Polish writer, Henryk Sienkiewicz, has called 'Platonic envy'. Anywhere else people are inclined to become jealous of those who have succeeded in their own profession or in their own line of business; but in the case of 'Platonic envy' they become jealous if any one who attains a high position in any rank of life. This, the singer is envious of the success of a literary man, the shoemaker of a poet, the laundress of an actress, and the artist of a society man.

Of course, having achieved success, I was subjected to many attacks. (Modjeska 1910, 239)

Two incidents stand out, both of which seem to have both hurt and shaped Modrzejewska. The first was Edward Lubowski's novella *Aktorka* (*The Actress*), which was serialized beginning in December 1870 in the magazine *Tygodnik Powieści i Romansów*. This novella ridiculed Modrzejewska in the most extreme way. The second incident was that a few years later Modrzejewska's husband Karol was caricatured on stage by the actor Władysław Szymanowski in the production of the four-act play *Nietoperze* (*The Bats*) by the same author. Modrzejewska even attended the premiere on 4 January 1875, as the critic Józef Kotarbiński, who was also in the theatre on that evening, recalls:

When I met the artist in the interval in the corridor, she calmly said to me with her gentle smile:

—Mr. Szymanowski is playing Karol!

I tried not to make the matter worse and changed the subject, talking of the value of comedy, but in the theatre this bullying caused a stir. (Kotarbiński 1924, 117)

This incident is of interest because it is repeatedly assumed to be one of the most important reasons for Modrzejewska's emigration to the United States, for example by the Polish theatre scholar Józef Szczublewski, who cites it explicitly as the reason for her emigration (1975, 177), but also by

Modrzejewska's contemporaries, such as Kotarbiński quoted above, who in the context of the unfortunate premiere of *Nietoperze* held on to the assumption that it was not just the desire to triumph in the United States that drove the actress from the country, but also this atmosphere of Warsaw life that resented her and her husband not only because of her successes, but also because of the marriage between an aristocrat and an actress, which seemed to be a provocation and a reason for taunts for many. Kotarbiński sums up:

Malicious and silly rumours that grew around her husband, to whom she owed much social and intellectual culture, also contributed to her departure. Let us not forget that the great artist spent many years in her youth wandering around on the provincial stages. Thanks to the intelligent help of Karol Chłapowski and his literary knowledge, she achieved renown and was accepted by the upper echelons of society, who were charmed by her. It's no wonder that malicious gossips started to attack her private relationships. (1924, 116)

Beth Holmgren describes the circumstances surrounding the marriage in *Starring Madame Modjeska*, noting that Chłapowski gave up his own career for his wife. Moving from Krakow to Warsaw meant he had to give up his work as the editor of the magazine *Kraj*, and he was not able to gain a foothold in journalism in Warsaw. He was forced to take on various office jobs, which in no way fulfilled him. She concludes that it was this situation that contributed to their desire 'to quit the fishbowl of Warsaw' (Holmgren 2012, 82). As sources show, Chłapowski saw the United States not only as a place where his wife would have career options, but one in which he could find new fields of activity as well. Together with friends, with whom they left Europe, he planned to establish a colony and to live self-sufficiently. For both him and his wife, the idea of emigration thus not only meant to escape their Warsaw life, but also a fascinating opportunity to start afresh in an unknown and as yet unseen continent, which they also associated with colonial fantasies:

Henryk Sienkiewicz was the first to advocate emigration. Little by little others followed him, and soon five of them express the desire to seek adventures in the jungles of the virgin land. My husband, seeing the eagerness of the young men, conceived the idea of forming a colony in California [...]. The project was received with acclamation. Regular meetings were arranged, and the different points of the enterprise discussed. [...] What wild dreams

we dreamt! [...] I pictured to myself a life of toil under the blue skies of California, among the hills, riding on horseback with a gun over my shoulder. (Modjeska, 248 f.)

Still another factor to emigrate was the problematic political situation at home, ‘where’—as the actress writes in her memoirs—‘government persecution penetrates into the most intimate recess of private life, causing a continual nervous tension’ (Modjeska 1910, 241). Emigration was thus also a possibility to escape from this situation and breathe in freedom, or, as Modrzejewska puts it, ‘the possibility of settling down somewhere in the land of freedom, away from the daily vexations in which every Pole was exposed in Russian or Prussian Poland’ (Modjeska 1910, 248). For the political situation not only affected her private life, but also her career due to restrictions of her artistic freedom, which led to clashes with the board of censors. For example, when Modrzejewska attempted to bring Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* to the stage in Warsaw, the censor initially rejected it on the grounds that one of the themes of the play is regicide, which, in his opinion, could arouse disloyal thoughts towards the Russian tsar amongst the Polish audience.<sup>6</sup> A similar case was that of *Mazepa*, a play by Juliusz Słowacki, which the author had written in exile in Paris in 1839 and in which one of the leading roles was a Polish king, a situation, which, in the view of the censor, had no place on a stage in Warsaw (Modjeska 1910, 241 ff.).

Officially, the actress allowed another version and stated health problems and a necessary rest period as reasons for a trip to the United States. In a letter to her friend Anna Wolska dated 13 February 1876, for example, she wrote: ‘I will inform or tell you about our plans later—but for now, let me say that I am taking a year’s holiday to recuperate, and I am withdrawing from the stage’ (Modrzejewska 1876a, 296). In her memoirs, that is retrospectively, Modrzejewska also blamed failing health and overwork for forcing her to take a break: ‘my husband’s only desire was to take me away from my surroundings and give me perfect rest from my work. He thought, and the doctors agreed with him, that a long sea voyage might restore my health and strengthen my nerves’ (Modjeska 1910,

<sup>6</sup>It was only thanks to the intercession of the pianist Maria Kalergis, Muchanow’s wife, who was able to convince the head censor that the murder of the king in this tragedy was solely an internal matter of a Danish royal family and in no way politically motivated, that the performance was able to take place on 24 March 1871. Cf. Szczublewski 1975, 133; for general information on this production of *Hamlet* in Warsaw, see Waszkiel 2020.

258). She also made it publicly known that she was planning a trip to the United States to recuperate and sightsee. In an article in *Kurier Warszawski* on 22 June 1876, on the occasion of her last performance before her departure, a journalist writes: ‘We also once again wish her bon voyage and get well soon and hope that Ms. Modrzejewska will be back in Warsaw in autumn at the latest’ (2).

## CONCLUSION

Studying the biographies of theatre professionals in the nineteenth century not only permits a fascinating insight into the diversity of their mobile activities, but also demonstrates the necessity of understanding these multifaceted movements in space and time. The introduction of the concept of the *theatre migrant* therefore aims to elaborate on a particular phenomenon of the time, and at the same time to differentiate between migration and labour mobility—such as the guest performances and tours—with a new term which more accurately captures actor’s movements around the world. While labour mobility indicates a change of location, in contrast to migration, it is not a relocation of one’s primary place of residence and centre of life. Although the protagonists involved in labour mobility also encounter other languages and cultures, these encounters are for a limited time, while migration does not always include the option of returning and thus requires a deeper involvement with the situation. The boundary between labour migration and labour mobility is just as fluid as the complex reasons for individual’s migration since no migration can be traced back to a single reason. Instead, individual motives are woven together in a complex web of structural factors and external influences.

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*A French Hotel in Lima, Russia in Paris,*  
and *Theatre Laws in Transylvania:*  
On Migration, Travel, and Transnational  
Female Theatre Historiography

*Martina Groß*

This chapter aims to provide a comparative insight into the complex interrelation of travel literature and migration literature or—to be more specific—into travel and migration and their literary documentation and aesthetic reflection. Focusing on the idea of a transnational female theatre historiography, I also wish to show how travel writing and historical migration research can be linked beyond the comparison of travel literature and migration literature—more precisely, what potential is inherent in travelogues as sources for historical migration research. I will illustrate this through the travelogue *Pérégrinations d'une paria* (1838) by French-Peruvian writer, socialist and activist Flora Tristan, the *Reise-Erinnerungen* (1846) of the actress Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück and the migration

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experiences of the writer and playwright Juliane Déry. The travelogue of Tristan, which tells the story of a now unknown opera singer who migrated to Peru, provides an impressive example of how travelogues can offer important insights and information for migration research. The travel and migration memoirs and experiences of Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück and Juliane Déry help me to explore similarities and differences between migration and travel experiences in terms of cultural hybridity, the experience of alterity, and the transfer of (artistic) knowledge. While Juliane Déry's works, such as the gender-critical one-act play *Es fiel ein Reif* (1896) and the novella *Rußland in Paris* (1893), deal, in particular, with hybrid identity formation and its performativity in the sense of *transdifference*, Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück's travel memoirs almost absolutise travel and mobility as a form of (artistic) existence. Both theatre women, however, share a specific view and a specific questioning of cultural hybridity, alterity, and gender.

The almost total absence of these women and their testimonies in archives or theatre histories strikingly illustrates, as I will argue, a double marginalisation of female voices in theatre historiography. This hardly comes as a surprise given that travel literature written by theatre professionals and spectators, whether they can be classified as theatre migrants or theatre travellers, is understudied yet essential material for theatre historiography. Although the production of knowledge since early modern theatre originated in travels and reports on these travels by actors, authors, spectators, philosophers, and others, European theatre served as a medium of national culture and led to the persistent omission of travel and migration literature in a mainly nationally oriented theatre historiography (cf. Hulfeld 2007; Groß 2020). On the one hand, this can be attributed to the great importance of the 'nation' as an object of study for historiography since the late Enlightenment (Patel 2008, 67–89). On the other hand, theatre historiography that has elevated the settled nature of actors to the norm in the theatre-historical process has reinforced the limited engagement with transnational theatre practice (Schmitt 1990, 187). This is evidenced by the fact that most archives are structured according to a nation-state or local-town principle, which is why mobile actors are rarely comprehensively recorded (Szymanski-Düll 2020a, 82). Another aspect of transnational theatre history worth highlighting here is the strong interest of theatre studies in the history of performance or production analysis, in the context of which certain aspects, especially those that are outside of the stage and refer to infrastructure or the effects of mobility, often remain

unconsidered (Szymanski-Düll 2020a, 82; Groß 2021, 70). Referring to the mechanisms that exclude female voices in theatre history, the chapter concludes accordingly with a plea for the perspective of a transnational female theatre historiography, as female theatre migrants/travellers were indeed doing transnational theatre historiography in writing their memoirs and reflecting on theatre around them.

This contribution therefore gives the travelogue a central position, first in relation to migration writing/migration literature, beyond that in its potential for historical migration research, and more fundamentally as source and material from the perspective of a female transnational theatre historiography.

### TRAVEL ≠ MIGRATION!?! SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TRAVEL LITERATURE AND MIGRATION LITERATURE

The study of travel and migration and the relationship between the two face definitional challenges that, on the one hand, result from the overlapping phenomena and entanglements of travel and migration and, on the other hand, require a general differentiation regarding the disciplines associated with them.

If we first focus on travel and migration as socio-cultural practices, both have movement in space and similar transportation in common. However, while travel, with a few exceptions, is generally seen as a voluntary act, this is not necessarily the case for migration. A second crucial difference is that travellers return to their place of origin, while migrants mostly settle in a new destination. Historian and migration researcher Jochen Oltmer gives the following definition in his seminal work on migration published in 2010: 'Migration is the spatial relocation of the place of residence of individuals, families, groups or even entire populations for a longer period of time'<sup>1</sup> (2010, 1). Although this definition remains vague regarding duration and the question of spatial distance, it clearly distinguishes the relocation of the place of residence from a journey (cf. Szymanski-Düll 2020b).<sup>2</sup> This perspective is also pursued by (historical) travel and migration research, in which there have been repeated attempts to interconnect travel and migration and to relate them to each other (Arapoglou et al.

<sup>1</sup> Here and in the following, all translations into English have been provided by the author of this chapter unless otherwise acknowledged.

<sup>2</sup> On this topic, see also the article by Berenika Szymanski-Düll in this publication.

2014; Geoffroy and Sibley 2007; Glage 2000), especially since the emergence of the so-called mobility turn (Urry 2016).

Writing about travel and migration and its literary and genre-theoretical classification appears to present a much more complex question. The (different) use of the literary concepts ‘migration writing’/‘travel writing’ and ‘migration literature’/‘travel literature’ alone points to continuously changing phenomena—in terms of both socio-cultural practice and the definition and transformation of genres. While migration writing and travel writing characterise the fundamental aesthetic practice of *writing about* migration and travel, migration literature and travel literature also always refer to their literary and genre-theoretical location—in other words, a *writing in*. In this process, the literary genre is always influenced by the reason for mobility, its catalyst and, as is the focus of this chapter, by the gender, class, and race of the person writing and moving in space.

In her article ‘Defining Migration Writing’, published in 2022, the literary scholar Joanna Kosmalska attempts to define migration writing with a view to current debates on migration and literature, which I find very helpful for the reflections and arguments in this chapter. Kosmalska examines the concept of migration writing not in isolation, but in relation to other literary terms and affiliated concepts. Her starting point is to specify ‘a study of theory in autobiography, travel writing and, most of all, post-colonial literature’ (2022, 332). She refers to the publications *Autobiography* by Linda Anderson, *Travel Writing* by Carl Thompson, and *The Location of Culture* by Homi K. Bhabha as ‘very useful in tracking down analogies between the abovementioned concepts and migration writing’ (2022, 332), such as ‘the blending of fact and fiction [...] a feature that migration writing shares with life writing and travel books; and a hybrid form, structure and style [...] that it has in common with postcolonial literature’ (2022, 332). At the same time, she points out crucial differences, such as the fact that ‘not all migration writing is autobiographical or takes place in a colonial setting and, obviously, not all autobiographies and postcolonial literature deal with migration’ (2022, 332). Thus, she formulates her principal definition of migration writing by comparing it to migration literature ‘which in some countries [...] denotes creative works only’ (2022, 341) and elaborates:

The label is used by me as a term for a whole variety of different types of literary and non-literary texts that have been published since the 1990s. These texts either tackle the topic of migration or emerge from the experi-

ence of migration (but not necessarily address the subject of migration). It is also not necessary for the author to be a migrant: it is enough that his or her work is inspired or influenced by the experience of migration and is imbued with a vision of cosmopolitan, transnational, hybrid society and the globalised world. (2022, 331)

Given this extensive definition, Kosmalska considers the time frame of ‘since the 1990s’ useful. She borrows this time frame from the Italian literary scholar Margherita Ganeri, who, however, considers it essential to be able to classify the genre-theoretical concept of migration literature in terms of literary history:

[I]f we consider migration a literary theme, as many have done, we should also admit that a specific field of inquiry called migration literature would cover nearly all the literary histories of all times. Because every author who writes or has written in the past, in wide or limited ways, about migration experiences, should be included in it. (Ganeri 2010, 437–438)

In terms of the present chapter, it should be added that the concepts of travel writing/travel literature share this temporal and geographical challenge (cf. Ette 2020, 131–140).

In recent research on migration literature, literary theorists such as Fatehma Pourjafari and Jeanne E. Glesener address the proximity to ‘New World literature’ (2014, 2016) and refer, like Joanna Kosmalska, to Homi K. Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* and his description of the “‘unhomely’” condition of the modern world’ (1994, 11). The approach of considering migration literature as world literature originates from his updating of Goethe’s concept of *Weltliteratur* in *The Location of Culture*:

Goethe suggests that the possibility of a world literature arises from the cultural confusion wrought by terrible wars and mutual conflicts. [...] The study of world literature might be the study of the way in which cultures recognize themselves through their projections of ‘otherness’. Where, once, the transmission of national traditions was the major theme of world literature, perhaps we can now suggest that transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees—these border and frontier conditions—may be the terrains of world literature. (Bhabha 1994, 11)

Jeanne E. Glesener points out that ‘[b]efore migration literature was discussed in terms of world literature, it was, along with postcolonial

literature emerging from the centres of the old empires, sometimes called “world fiction”, as was the case in Great-Britain for instance’ (2016). Fatemeh Pourjafari and Abdolali Vahidpour also emphasise ‘that Postcolonialism and its prominent theorists have contributed to a great extent to migration literature by identifying a framework of features and principles—either thematically or stylistically—for it’ (2014, 680). They see in the significance of postcolonial theory for contemporary cultural studies the ‘necessity for the critics and scholars to study the basic principles and different aspects of the theory of migration literature and criticism with care and precision, in order to keep pace with the universal developments in the literary theories and movements’ (2014, 682). This shift towards transnational and transcultural perspectives in the humanities may explain the greater focus on both migration literature and travel literature.

Despite their ties to the age-old tradition of human mobility and its narratives, both genres had to wait until almost the 1980s to be considered in greater depth by scholars, and especially literary scholars, as essential studies such as Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes* illustrate. Thus, it is no coincidence that this took place in the context of post-colonial discourses and the strengthening of a literary science oriented towards cultural studies, as Claire Lindsay points out in her essay on *Travel Writing and Postcolonial Studies*: ‘Travel writing and postcolonial studies are common bedfellows, the first (a “genre”) a staple source for the second (a scholarly enterprise, if not a bordered discipline). Their relationship has been soldered by historical circumstances’ (2016, 25). Lindsay considers the interest in travel writing across a broad political spectrum, which Mary Campbell understood as ‘part of the necessary re-imagining of the world first occasioned by the post-World War Two resistance movements and wars of liberation in the former European colonies, as well as by the waves of immigration that followed’ (2002, 261).

Seen from this perspective, Travel Writing, very fundamentally, is the result *of* and comments *on* a global history of discoveries and conquests, imperialism, and colonial expansion, escape and migration. In turn, as Paul Smethurst notes in his introduction to *Travel Writing, Form, and Empire: The Poetics and Politics of Mobility*, ‘European travel writing, a corpus that spanning several centuries, has been hugely influential in producing and circulating knowledge about the rest of the world and fuelling aspirations for expansion and conquest’ (2009, 1). From a power-critical perspective and with a critical view of Eurocentrism, he argues that travel

and travel writing ‘were crucial to the discursive formation of empire, especially by their insinuation and cementation of crude binaries such as the West/the Rest, attached to which were the clearly pejorative formulations of civilised/savage, scientific/superstitious, and so on’ (2009, 1). Here, Smethurst follows the line of argumentation of Steve Clark, who in the late 1990s, with reference to the aforementioned analyses of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes*, methodically expanded the systematic involvement of travel writing in the imperial and colonial process for postcolonial theory (1999, 1–28).<sup>3</sup> With its emergence in the early 1980s and 1990s, the question of how gender, class, and race affect travel writing, and how these parameters interact, has become increasingly important. More so than Edward Said’s influential, yet controversial, study, Mary Louise Pratt addresses these questions with the exclusive focus on travelogues as material. In her claim that her study is both ‘a study in genre and a critique of ideology’ (1992, 3), she contributes to the processes of decolonisation that took place in the last decades of the twentieth century, which ‘opened the meaning-making powers of empire to scrutiny, as part of a large-scale effort to decolonize knowledge, history, and human relations’ (1992, 3).

Mary Louise Pratt’s detailed study examining the impact of early-nineteenth-century feminism on travel writing reveals the previously mentioned intertwining of gender, class and race with travel (writing), guided by the fundamental question of ‘how travel books written by Europeans about non-European parts of the world created the imperial order for Europeans “at home” [...] and how travel writing made imperial expansion meaningful and desirable to the citizenries of the imperial countries’ (1992, 3). Focusing on the question of female authority and utopian meaning, Pratt explores whether the author’s gender is a factor in the production of travel literature and concludes that it is. Looking at South America and its reinvention, she devotes a chapter to juxtaposing two different types of European travellers, the ‘capitalist vanguardists’ who have scripted themselves ‘into a wholly male heroic world’ (1992, 152) and the ‘exploratrices sociales’ who find their identity, personal independence and social authority abroad (1992, 152–168). Thus, she concludes about the entanglement of gender and genre: ‘It is also about gender, for this wave

<sup>3</sup>For a comparative analysis of these two seminal publications from a travel writing and postcolonial perspective, see Lindsay 2016, 25–34.



of traveler-writers included some European women, among the first to be taken seriously in the genre' (1992, 143).

This may be especially true of Flora Tristan in whose travelogue *Pérégrinations d'une paria* (*Peregrinations of a Pariah*; Engl. translation, 1985) Pratt recognises elaborate constructions of what she calls *feminotopias*: 'These are episodes that present idealized worlds of female autonomy, empowerment, and pleasure. Tristan finds such a feminotopia in Lima [...]' (1992, 163). Flora Tristan, women's rights activist, socialist and grandmother of Paul Gauguin, was born in Paris in 1803, as the daughter of a Frenchwoman and a noble Peruvian. She spent her early childhood in wealth, but when her father died and the family fell into poverty, she started work as a labourer in a printing workshop. At the age of seventeen, she entered into an unhappy marriage with the owner of the workshop. In 1833, she fled from her husband's mistreatment to Peru to seek financial support from her father's family. In her autobiographical travelogue, she writes about her impressions, encounters, and experiences of this journey. Historically, her travelogue is also of interest as it is considered 'the first critical study of the political, social and cultural realities of the non-European world from a woman's point of view to appear in Western Europe' (Tausch 1993, 127). It was also the first travelogue written in French to describe conditions in independent Peru after the independence struggles (1821–1824), making the *Pérégrinations* a pioneering work in this respect. After her return to France, she actively campaigned for the rights of women and workers before dying in Bordeaux in 1844 from a gunshot wound inflicted by her husband (Fig. 1).

In her study of Flora Tristan's travelogue, Julia C. Paulk refers specifically to the author's gender as a factor in the production of travel literature when she emphasises the differing motives for travelling: 'Female travelers in the nineteenth century often had different reasons for traveling and writing than did their male counterparts, and their gender circumscribed the activities in which they could participate while traveling and the topics that they could address in their written works' (2010, 119). In this regard, Friedrich Wolfzettel has pointed out that the *Pérégrinations* occupy a special position within the phenomenon of the 'travelling woman' and a 'female gaze', as:

The 'pérégrinations' mark a series of initiating stages which, once again, transform the initial inferior position of the female traveller into a position of intellectual and mental superiority. What Flora Tristan describes by using autobiographical elements is precisely the invention of a female gaze. (2012, 23)

**Fig. 1** Jules Laure,  
Portrait of Flora Tristan  
(1803–1844), lithograph  
1847, Wikimedia Commons



In this evaluation, Wolfzettel also refers to the fact that travel (and writing about it) is a gendered phenomenon, as Mary Louise Pratt has previously pointed out.

#### TRAVELOGUES AND HISTORICAL MIGRATION RESEARCH

Moreover, and as mentioned in the introduction, Flora Tristan's travelogue is a perfect illustration of how travel writing and historical migration research can be linked, beyond the comparison of travel literature and migration literature, in showing the potential that travelogues offer for historical migration research, as they contain a treasure trove of information and reveal knowledge about sources, places, itineraries, encounters and individual biographies. I will illustrate this by means of the story of Madame Denuelle, an innkeeper living in Lima who was a singer and actress at the Paris Opera before migrating to Peru. In her *Pérégrinations*, Flora Tristan describes their encounter in detail and provides us with knowledge about the fate of this artist and migrant that is probably not to be found elsewhere in such detail: 'Madame Denuelle has lived in Lima since 1826; she has established a hotel garni there which is the most

beautiful and best kept of all those in the city'<sup>4</sup> (1834, vol. 2, 330). Flora Tristan introduces the landlady of the inn, in which she stays after leaving her family in Arequipa. She is touched by the story of the French artist who migrated to Peru and emphatically describes the reasons for this to her readers, starting with her extraordinary success:

Madame Denuelle, who now runs a bed and breakfast in Lima, is none other than the beautiful, magnificent, seductive Mademoiselle Aubé, who made her debut at the Opéra in the role of the 'La Vestale'. Her voice, fresh, sonorous, expansive, obtained, in this role, the most brilliant success; there was convulsive stomping, dizzying applause at the first, second and third appearance of Mademoiselle Aubé. Three times crowned with the acclamations of public enthusiasm, the beginner, having reached the pinnacle of theatrical greatness, contracted a commitment of 15,000 fr. per year with the director. (1834, vol. 2, 330)

However, at the height of her success, the public withdraws its favour. An appearance in a new role, in which Madame Denuelle also hoped to excel, turns into a disaster. The bond between the celebrated actress and the audience seems to be broken and Madame Denuelle panics on stage. She can no longer get the right notes out and, in the end, she collapses and falls into the scenery.

This event killed Madame Denuelle's future; it was impossible for her to appear again at the Opéra; and, after having been engaged at the first lyric theatre in the world, her artist's self-esteem led her to refuse all the engagements that were offered to her for the theatres of Lyon, Bordeaux, and Marseille; she preferred to leave the country. For a long time, she was at the court of Louis Bonaparte, in Holland, and in Westphalia, with Jérôme. After the fall of the emperor, she found herself without a job and played in theatres in Dublin and London. From 1815 to 1825, her life was a succession of events, many of which proved disastrous... She lost her voice entirely and became too fat to appear on the stage. In the meantime, she had married M. Denuelle, a gentle, polite and very well-mannered man. After having tried everything to make a fortune without succeeding in anything, she decided to go to Peru, hoping that there fate would be less unfavourable to her. (Tristan 1834, vol. 2, 334–335)

<sup>4</sup>There is an English translation of the *Pérégrinations*, but it is an abridged version and it omits the life story of Madame Denuelle. Therefore, all translations into English were done by the author of this chapter.

This detailed description reveals the migrant's itinerary, why she left Paris, the places she went to, and how she arrived at her current place of residence. Structurally, this demonstrates how these biographies and information are often only documented in (women's) travelogues, as the contacts arose directly from networks of travelling women/migrants. In the early 1990s, the US historian, sociologist, and political scientist Charles Tilly pointed out the importance of migrants' social networks, which can range from family, to kinship, to ethnic or professional networks (1992). In the recently published new edition of her publication on historical migration research, historian Sylvia Hahn also states that, since the 1980s, with the increasing demand to include the category of gender in migration research in addition to the aspects of class and ethnicity, family and ethnic networks now also came into focus (2023, 54). Thus, regarding the potential of travelogues for historical migration research, another aspect of the intertwining of genre and gender noted by Mary Louise Pratt, Julia C. Paulk, and Friedrich Wolfzettel for travelogues (or more broadly for travel literature) can be observed here.

Beatrice Zucca Micheletto formulates it analogously for migration phenomena in her recent study on *Gender and Migration in Historical Perspective*, when she assesses the development of migration studies over the last forty years and how it has been influenced by the methodological implications of the category of gender:

Migrations are gendered phenomena: woman and men experience migration differently both because they are expected to act according to a specific ideology of masculinity and femininity, and because their reasons for migrating are different, linked to their social position and expectations of their natal community. (2022, 3)

Thus, it becomes apparent that what we already stated above for travel (literature) research is also valid for (historical) migration research, namely that the gender perspective is closely linked to an intersectional approach: 'gender, together with race and social class are variables that can better explain migration patterns' (Zucca Micheletto 2022, 3).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Zucca Micheletto omits the category of ableism here, although it is considered in recent studies, especially with regard to the phenomenon of travel (cf., for example, Forsdick 2019, 72–74).

In this context, Sylvia Hahn points to several gaps in migration research: hardly any studies address migration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Likewise, there has not been a focus on the participation of women in the migration process. Hahn also points to the ‘small-scale transboundary labour migrations of individual professional groups’, which deserve investigation because they have a long history (2023, 65). These desiderata of historical migration research, in particular the lack of focus on the participation of women in migration and the consideration of border-crossing labour migration of individual professional groups, can be counteracted by a historical and systematic study of travelogues, either by theatre migrants or by travellers who report on migrants in the context of encounters and within networks in terms of a transnational female theatre historiography, as is I am attempting here with the example of Flora Tristan’s travelogue and the history of Madame Denuelle.

Regarding the social distinction between travel and migration, as Mona Singer explains, there is not only a gender-specific distinction in play, but also that migrants are not epistemically understood as travellers, but as ‘Notkosmopoliten’ [emergency cosmopolitans], a term she borrows from Wolfgang Fritz Haug (2009). Cosmopolitans, on the other hand, educate themselves when they travel, they travel across borders because they have economic and/or cultural capital, their ventures know no national borders, and they are not strangers to the nation state (Singer 2012). It may therefore be of conceptual interest here to follow Mona Singer’s suggestion—with reference to the epistemological character of travel emphasised by Francis Bacon (1521–1626)—and to understand migration genuinely as travel in terms of epistemic knowledge (cf. Bacon 2005). Singer proposes this to counteract the predominant discourse on migration, which, she states, is characterised by a focus on the distinction between natives and foreigners and the question of integrating the latter (2012, 31). According to James Clifford, culture could be understood from the perspective of travel, whereby migration radically questions ‘the organic, naturalising bias of the term culture’ and undermines the demarcation between locals and non-locals:

If we rethink culture and its science, anthropology, in terms of travel, then the organic naturalizing bias of the term culture—seen as a rooted body that grows, lives, dies etc.—is questioned. Constructed and disputed *historicities*, sites of displacement, interference, and interaction, come more sharply into view. (1992, 101)

There is a long history of the role of travel and migration in the representation and transformation of identity—the same applies to the complex and continuously changing literary genre of travel literature (cf. Brenner 1990). Since every journey, displacement, or crossing involves a geographical and social repositioning and a reconsideration of the self in contact with the other, the study of the themes of mobility and migration in literature is always devoted to questions of how writers represent the world and the relationship between ‘here’ and ‘there’, ‘self’ and ‘other’. Whether something is experienced as ‘other’ and with which evaluations it is connoted differs according to the situation, the patterns of interpretation and the regulatory performance (Kleinau and Rendtorff 2012, 7–13). It depends on subjective preconceptions and the individual’s self-location: ‘The “other” is thus an act of construction by the subject, a measure of differentiation, an active “othering”, and the understanding of the “other” is an activity based on acts of self-understanding, self-interpretation’ (Kleinau and Rendtorff 2012, 7).

### TRANSCULTURALITY AND TRANSDIFFERENCE

In terms of the interweaving and overlapping phenomena between travel and migration literature, it can be stated that migrants, especially theatre migrants in the nineteenth century as will be outlined below, have also made numerous contributions to travel literature, while migration literature, despite all the openness of the genre, is more clearly rooted in its authorship (cf. for example Kosmalka 2022). Both genres are characterised by a cultural reflexivity of various forms and their own (subjective) ways of perceiving cultural encounters. They are not bound to specific genres in terms of their form, and they address the perception of alterity, the self and the other, albeit in different constellations, as the examples of Juliane Déry and Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück will show in the next part of this chapter. Beforehand, I would like to point out a difference between travel and migration literature that enables a helpful and yet discerning view of both phenomena and genres: that of *transculturality* and *transdifference*.

In migration literature and its theorisation, since the beginning of the 2000s, a new concept has emerged from discourses about concepts of hybridity and transculturality and the conviction that a static and autochthonous understanding of cultural entities or identities is no longer tenable, but rather that exchange phenomena, shifts in differences and the

emergence of the ‘third’ can be observed (Allolio-Näcke et al. 2005, 9–10).<sup>6</sup> Thus, the concept of *transdifférence*, first introduced by the American Studies scholars Helmbrecht Breinig and Klaus Lösch in a 2002 essay (2002, 11–36), exceeds transcultural experience by questioning any cultural concepts based on binary models of difference, by producing moments of uncertainty, undecidability, and contradiction that are suppressed in constructions of difference based on a binary logic of order:

The term *transdifférence* refers to phenomena of a co-presence of different or even oppositional properties, affiliations or elements of semantic and epistemological meaning construction, where this co-presence is regarded or experienced as cognitively or affectively dissonant, full of tension, and undissolvable. Phenomena of *transdifférence*, for instance socio-cultural affiliations, personality components or linguistic and other symbolic predi-cations, are encountered by individuals and groups and negotiated in their respective symbolic order. As a descriptive term *transdifférence* allows the presentation and analysis of such phenomena in the context of the production of meaning that transcend the range of models of binary difference. It is not to be confused with de-differentiation (as in concepts of synthesis, syncretism, transculturation) or with *différance* as spatialising-temporalising deferral. (Breinig and Lösch 2006, 105)

In summary, following this approach, it can be stated: while travel literature thus belongs primarily to the realm of the transcultural or transnational (cf. Groß 2020), migration experience and its literary documentation can be classified in the realm of *transdifférence*, as this phenomenon refers to multiple cultural belonging, which is expressed in the constant mutual overlapping, change, and contradictoriness of aspects of belonging.<sup>7</sup> This is also apparent in the following presentation of Juliane Déry’s work, particularly in comparison with Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück’s travelogue.

<sup>6</sup>In this concept, as in the debate on migration literature as ‘New World Literature’, the eminent importance of Homi K. Bhabha’s *Location of Culture* is also evident.

<sup>7</sup>See also the FWF research project ‘Transdifférenz in der Literatur deutschsprachiger Migrantinnen in Österreich-Ungarn’, which investigated *transdifférence* in the literature of German-speaking migrant women in Austria-Hungary from 2012 to 2016. <https://transdifférenz-datenbank.univie.ac/> (accessed 10 February 2024).

## MIGRATION AND TRAVEL EXPERIENCE: JULIANE DÉRY AND MINNA WOHLGEBOREN-WOHLBRÜCK

Juliane Déry was born Julia Deutsch on 10 July 1861 into a Hungarian-speaking Jewish family in Baja in the south of the then Kingdom of Hungary (cf. Schwartz 2018, 228–229).<sup>8</sup> The family moved to Vienna in the 1870s, where Julia left the Jewish community on 17 June 1877 and was baptised a Protestant only a short time later. In 1882, she and other family members changed their name from Deutsch to Déry. Without any connections to literary networks, Juliane Déry sent her novella *Meine Braut* (*My Bride*) to the publicist Karl Emil Franzos, who published it in 1888 in his journal *Deutsche Dichtung*; it also appeared in book form in the same year (Déry 1888). Despite doubts about her cultural identity and a literary career as a young woman without important connections and without a big name, Déry, encouraged by the success of her first publication, pursued her artistic ambition to experience the literary and cultural pulse of her time (Fig. 2).

Her letters between 1887 and 1899 were written from various big cities, such as Vienna, Paris—where she met Zola and Dreyfus, among others—Berlin and Munich, where she was involved in the founding of the ‘Intimate Theatre’ [Intimes Theater] (Halbe 1895), but also from smaller

**Fig. 2** Portrait of Juliane Déry by Franz von Stuck (before 1898, source: Bierbaum 1924, 84)



<sup>8</sup>In the rather sparse sources on the life of Juliane Déry, different dates of birth are given: both 10 August 1864 and 10 July 1861 can be found. I use 10 July 1861, following Agatha Schwartz and her research.



places such as Coburg (Saxony), Loctudy (Brittany), Berck (Normandy) and Heiden (in Switzerland). The dates of these letters indicate that she travelled back and forth a lot, changing her place of residence frequently, and that it is therefore hardly possible to establish a linear chronology. It is noticeable that not only the numerous places of origin of her letters, but also the dispersed nature of their repository and archiving suggests a multiple cultural affiliation. The Serbian-Canadian literary scholar Agatha Schwartz, who, according to my research, is the author of the only comprehensive and analytical publication on the life and work of Juliane Déry, therefore pleads that we apply the theories of *transdifference* and hybridity to the interpretation of the work of this German-speaking author of Jewish-Hungarian origin (2018, 228).

Juliane Déry undeniably lived a transcultural life between several languages, countries, and identities, as an actress and as an author of novellas, plays, poems, and so on. Karl Emil Franzos, her promoter, refers in his biography of her to her transdifferent self-positioning, as a result of which she often suffered from the binary attributions of identity. He quotes a statement by Déry to this effect on the occasion of their first meeting:

What am I, Jewish or Catholic, Hungarian or German? And what should I become, actress or writer? But no, I am the daughter of a respectable house and want nothing more than a quiet happiness at the side of a beloved husband. Should I drop everything and get married? (1899, 52)

This quotation may indicate that unruliness that rebels against classification in the polarity of binary differences (Lösch 2005), which Klaus Lösch sees as characteristic of *transdifference*. Yet at the same time, a performative process of cultural expression to produce one's own cultural identity, as defined by Homi K. Bhabha, is also evident here:

What is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, contingently, 'opening out', remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference—be it class, gender or race. Such assignations of social differences—where difference is neither One nor the Other but something else besides, in-between [...]. (1994, 219)

In her novella *Rußland in Paris* (*Russia in Paris*)—as the title indicates—Paris is the setting for the novella about Russian migrants. The latter appear here as the 'others' of the French writer Jacques Laurent, who

seeks to befriend them because of his stereotypical expectation that this will bring him closer to, ‘the pain of the Slavs’ [‘der Schmerz der Slaven’] (Déry 1895, 89). An answer to the fundamental question of marriage and family is given by the character of Madja. She is a Jewish Russian whose parents fell victim to the pogroms in Russia. In contrast to Laurent’s French nationalism, Madja condemns patriotism as the main cause of hatred among nations: ‘Patriotism must stop! Patriotism is one of the worst poisons, and it’s killing us all!’ (Déry 1895, 97). Through the character of Madja, Déry sketches a utopia without borders, without classes, nations, and religions, a world in which there should be no ‘others’. In this light, it seems only consistent that Madja feels like a stranger in all countries, since the nation state is favoured there, and the reality of cultural hybridisation is denied. Thus, the answer to the above-quoted fundamental question about marriage and family/motherhood can only be a rejection, which Déry simultaneously gives herself through Madja: ‘In the end, I didn’t want to get married for fear of having children. Anything but that! For imagine my child coming into the world, looking around far and wide and asking: Mother, where is my homeland?’ (Déry 1895, 98).

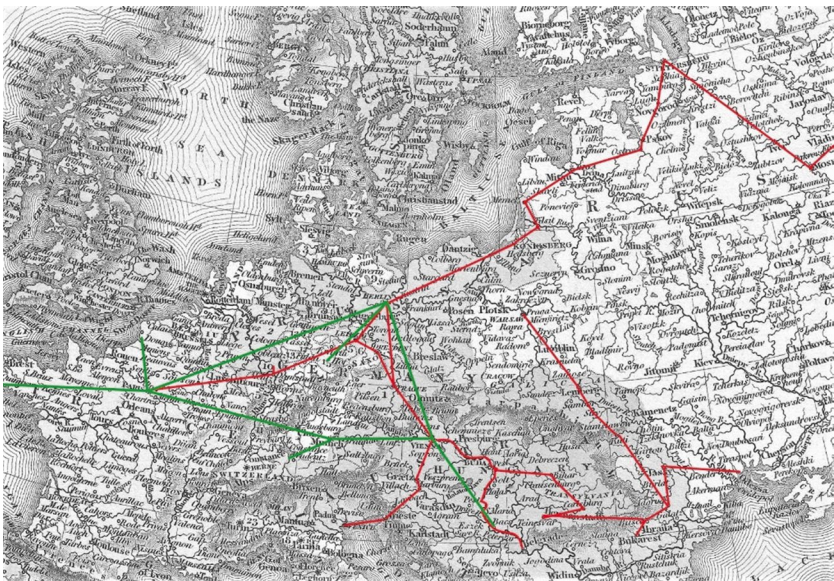
The theme of cultural hybridisation is also actualised through another character in this novella. Adler, like Madja, is a Jewish-Russian migrant in Paris who understands the hybridity of national cultures as transcending generations: ‘My father was Jewish, I am Russian, and my son will be French’ (Déry 1895, 101). Adler defines himself as a cultural and national hybrid; at most, he could be read as European. Agatha Schwartz points out that in creating her characters Juliane Déry deconstructs the concept of ‘pure’ nations and already points in the direction of theories of hybridity that oppose the claim of purity of culture (2018, 238).

Déry also addresses cultural hybridisation in her gender-critical one-act play *Es fiel ein Reif* from 1896, especially in her critical reflection on the situation of women in society at the end of the nineteenth century. In this respect, her description of her experience is very similar to that of the actress Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück in the middle of the century. Both women share the same position—that the role assigned to women by society is unbearable in several respects and, in particular, impedes their mobility, whether as travellers or migrants.

In *Es fiel ein Reif*, Déry uses Madame Teste Le Beau, an Austrian living in Paris, and Paul, a refugee from Vienna for family reasons, to formulate a hybrid identity in terms of emotion and language. Thus, Paul gives an insight into his emotional state: ‘I have changed. You see, it happens to

others too. That's probably the case here. Everything changes in Paris! You get up one fine day and no longer recognise yourself. And you can't use the old feelings any more' (Déry 1896, 11–12). Juliane Déry stages the linguistic manifestation of hybrid identity and *transdifference* when Madame Teste Le Beau cannot find a corresponding German expression for a Parisian one: 'Car je ne respire que le monde? What do you call that in German? But you have no word for that, you have no concept of it! Now the Paris sun has hatched me, and how swiftly!' (Déry 1896, 7) The identity of Madame Teste Le Beau can also be understood, as Agatha Schwartz points out referring to Homi. K. Bhabha, as a kind of 'third space' in the sense that 'we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves' (Bhabha 2006, 157).

This turn towards a transdifferentiated sensibility, the difficult localisation of one's homeland and the struggle with hybrid identity formation are not to be found in Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück's travel memoirs—although for her, too, homeland, the perception of alterity and gender binarity, and cultural and social criticism are essential themes (Fig. 3).



**Fig. 3** The itineraries of Juliane Déry (green) and Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück (red), by Martina Groß

Her biography is quickly told, because we know nothing about her; she left nothing but almost 200 pages of travel memoirs (1846). There are two reviews on the publication of her travel memoirs from October and December 1846, both of which strike a very benevolent tone and affirm the benefits for artistic or theatrical knowledge production and knowledge transfer.<sup>9</sup> For instance, the author of the review of Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück's *Reise-Erinnerungen* in *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung* of 28 October 1846 comments: 'A lady who travelled so far in her profession as an actress certainly also has experiences to share, the transmission of which would be instructive and would certainly benefit her art, as well as her disciples' (Fig. 4).<sup>10</sup>

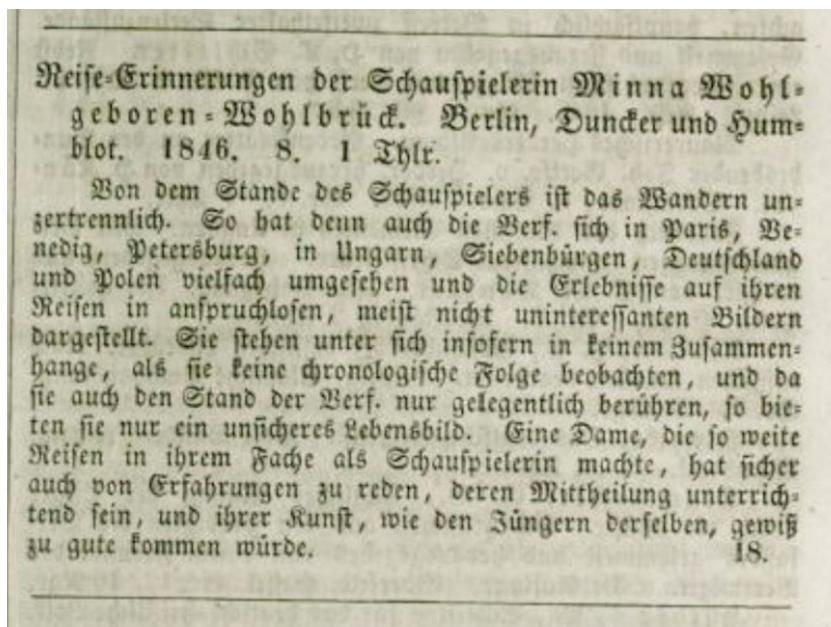


Fig. 4 Review of Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrücks *Reise-Erinnerungen*

<sup>9</sup> See reviews on Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrücks *Reise-Erinnerungen*. In *Der Hausfreund, ein Augsburger Morgenblatt*, no. 358 (30.12.1846) and in *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, no. 301:1203 (28.10.1846).

<sup>10</sup> Review on Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrücks *Reise-Erinnerungen*. In *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, Nr. 301:1203.

The actress Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück is probably one of those theatre migrants in the theatre business of the nineteenth century who travelled constantly from one theatre engagement to another, sometimes not returning to their place of origin for years and alienated from their home. At least, this is the impression suggested by reading her travel memoirs, whose reflections unfold alongside political events, regional and world affairs, constantly referring to her role as a female actor locating herself in the tradition of *ars apodemica* (cf. Stagl 1995, 70–94; Wolfzettel 1997, 44–59) with a critical eye to different modes and conditions of mobility:

It is easy for those who have never come down from the soil that produced and gave birth to them to talk about travelling, about the pleasant, enjoyable and instructive aspects of it. But even those who have really travelled, on business or for pleasure, in civilised countries with well-ordered postal connections or even railways, on well-trodden paths, with properly visaed passports and a properly stocked purse—even they have no idea of the peculiar, half comically amusing, half annoying and not infrequently tragically serious situations into which a travelling artist, or even a female artist, is placed when travelling. (Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück 1846, 114)

She writes these words on a long and physically very difficult journey through the Kingdom of Hungary, which also makes her question her own German bourgeois national theatre culture when she refers to critical voices lamenting the decay of the German stage and the remarkable lack of truly original theatre artists and productions in recent times. According to the critics, this is at least partly due to the stable social position and orderly, bourgeois living conditions of German actors. Minna counters this statement by saying that if one really wanted to take the vague disorder, the loose position of the stage artists, detached from all bourgeois ties, as a measure of the artistic quality of the stage, then Hungarian theatre art would be at its peak:

[...] and if one really wanted to take the irregularity, the vague disorder and the loose position of the stage artists, detached from all bourgeois ties, dependent only on the moment and consecrated to it, as a measure for the artistic height of the stage, then the dramatic art in Hungary would stand on a summit of perfection from which it could proudly look down on all the others. (Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück 1846, 100)

This statement is remarkable insofar as the middle of the nineteenth century represented the heyday of a nationally culturally oriented bourgeois theatre culture in Germany, which, however, appears at once porous and theoretically constructed and has little to do with theatre practice operating transnationally.<sup>11</sup>

Minna's remarks overall testify to a clear attitude regarding the experience of alterity, a clear assignment to home, gender roles and cultural encounters. At the same time, she formulates ambivalent attitudes and critically differentiates between binary logics. Thus, she categorically condemns any kind of slavery, and European colonialism, as she explains in her chapter on the trafficking of girls:

In our time, whose most lively striving is to establish and carry out as a principle the recognition of the individual human being in his personal and individual right [...] it was probably natural that one also stood up against the most ignoble and devilish of all speculations to which the commercial spirit has ever fallen, I mean the slave trade. (Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück 1846, 73)

At the same time, as the chapter on a night spent with the Romani people reveals (Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück 1846, 66–72), her travelogue and the observations she records are not without stereotyping, which again is a feature of many nineteenth-century travelogues, even if they are set in a context of cultural hybridisation and critical questioning of colonialism and imperialism.<sup>12</sup>

Despite all the critical distance we should have to her observations and situational descriptions, the aspect of knowledge transfer, which is undoubtedly inherent in Minna's travelogue should not be underestimated. Not only does her travelogue inform its readers—sometimes

<sup>11</sup>Incidentally, other travelogues by theatre artists, such as August Klingemann's *Reiseblätter*, which fundamentally deconstruct the idea of a (German) national theatre culture, also testify to this (Klingemann 1819–1828).

<sup>12</sup>For instance, Gérard de Nerval's *Voyage en Orient* is accorded a special status among other nineteenth-century travel writers, such as Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and Flaubert, who Edward Said includes as proponents of European Orientalism: 'More truthful than mere picturesque voyages, such as the ones written by Chateaubriand and Lamartine that use the Orient as an object of style, more real than scientific accounts because it incorporates the subjective experiences of its narrator, the *Voyage en Orient* attempts to portray the perfect balance of ethnographic literature, anticipating Leiris and Lévi-Strauss by almost a century' (Bray 2013, 65).

implicitly, sometimes explicitly—about political and social, regional, and global events, but the specific gaze on theatre, on its practice and on its regularities runs like a red thread through the report. In this respect, it is worth mentioning here her explanation of a theatre law in Transylvania, which granted a director of a troupe an ‘unrestricted patriarchal power’ [‘unumschränkte, patriacharliche Gewalt’] over its members (Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück 1846, 106). The law prohibited actors and all members of a troupe from breaking their engagement and evading their obligations by running away. It allowed directors to forcibly return renegade actors like criminals in chains to fulfil their obligation. Minna is astonished to see the two gentlemen she had seen in chains that afternoon on the road from Sibiu to Brasov on stage again that same evening in the theatre in Brasov, lively and uninhibited (Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück 1846, 106–107).

In summary, we can state that, with regard to Juliane Déry’s migration experience and Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück’s travel experience, despite all the overlaps that have already become apparent in the course of this chapter, a significant difference emerges between what is generally defined as travel literature and what is characterised as migration literature: the narration. While Juliane Déry’s one-act play *Es fiel ein Reif* and her novella *Russland in Paris* express a migration experience whose narrative focus is analytically inward, on the identity conflict, which is also processed linguistically, Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück, as mentioned earlier, repeatedly refers to her role as an actress, locates herself in the tradition of *ars apodemica* and critically illuminates the various forms and conditions of mobility. Her narrative focus is obviously directed outwards, she relates herself and her travelogue to other travellers and their descriptions, which according to the travel literature researcher and Romance philologist Friedrich Wolfzettel is a constitutive element of travelogues:

From the very beginning, description plays a constitutive role in the travelogue as the very place of mediation of the ‘other’, and it is no coincidence that the term ‘Reisebericht’ (récit de voyage, travel account, resoconto di viaggio, relacion de viaje [...]), which is common in most languages, is accompanied in German by the term ‘Reisebeschreibung’, which understands the narrative element as part of the description. (1997, 44)

## CONCLUSION AND PERSPECTIVES: TRANSNATIONAL FEMALE THEATRE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück's travel memoirs and Juliane Déry's literary-performative exploration of migration experience are examples of the pluralism of travel narratives, which is particularly visible in the nineteenth century, the heyday of travel literature and a period rich in female travel writers. Through their works, we can also observe how differently they experienced and presented nineteenth-century European theatre culture. Of course, there are many more examples of writers leaving the European continent, but to show the differences and similarities between travel and migration in this context, I have chosen the example of Minna Wohlgeboren-Wohlbrück and Juliane Déry, two women travelling similar routes.

Regarding the methodological problem of female travel writing (Scheitler 1999), the fact that—independent of the discourse of gender and *écriture féminine*—literary history has long underestimated the 'genre viatique' is of great significance (cf. Wolfzettel 2012, 19–27). The marginalisation of travel literature in literary history helps us to understand why in theatre history, which is mainly a product of the long nineteenth century, women are almost absent. As mentioned above, nineteenth-century travel writing also became a female domain and a medium of feminine expression. Thus, the fact that the predominantly nationally orientated theatre historiography ignored travelogues intensified the marginalisation of possible female contributions in the field.

It is thus clear why the absence of travelling/migrating women and their testimonies in archives or theatre histories is not a surprise, but a result of exclusion mechanisms, which in turn can only be revealed through a genre-specific analysis including the categories of gender, class, and race as well as a necessarily transnational perspective. This has already been pointed out by Bénédicte Monicat in *Itinéraires de l'écriture au féminin: Voyageuses du 19e siècle* in which she emphasises the significance of a comparative study of travel research in light of the obvious national dividing line that separates travel literature research in different countries (1996).

Finally, there is no doubt that travelogues represent diverse material and an important source of a different historiography, whether in more general terms with the aim of decolonising knowledge, or more specifically with a view to micro-histories and individual cases. Beyond theatrical historiography, travelogues, as we have seen, can be a useful source for



historical migration research, as they contain a treasure trove of information about sources, places, itineraries, encounters, and individual biographies.

In conclusion, these questions, and the material that travelogues provide us, are significant not only for theatre studies itself and, as outlined, as potential for historical migration research, but also for related disciplines such as comparative literary history. Minna's travel memoirs bear astonishing witness to the shift from picturesque to theatricalised travel discourse ['theatralen Reisediskurs'] in the mid-nineteenth century, as noted by the Romance philologist Frank Estelmann (2007, 240). The question here is whether this media-historical transition from picturesque to theatrical travel discourse is related to theatre migration and travel itself or to the fact that many theatre people travel and write reports that transform the genre itself in their language and the innovative poetics of theatrical enactment ['innovative Poetik der theatralen Inszenierung'] (Estelmann 2007, 242). This remains to be investigated and extends far beyond the European context and therefore requires further study of sources.

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# ‘True-Born Emigrants’: The Predicament of Actors on Nineteenth-Century Polish Stage in the Context of Migration

*Dorota Jarzabek-Wasyl*

‘AN EMIGRANT! [...] WHAT USE IS THAT TO US?  
WE HAVE ENOUGH OF THEM ALREADY’

The following scene played out on the northern frontage of the market square in Kraków in 1867:

He: unusually tall, thin, pale, with wise and strangely shining eyes. She: petite, black-haired, dusky-skinned, agile and flexible in her movements.

- Who are they? —wondered a group of men eager to gossip.

- I am informed by an impeccable source—remarked one—that they are English.

- No, not English—said another—they are French, I heard them speaking to each other in French.

- You’re making it up—they’re Swedes.

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And these gossipers would have long debated this interesting couple had not a passer-by interrupted their spiralling conjectures [...]

- That is Józef Narzyski with his wife.

- Narzyski? So, he's a Pole.

- Of course, back from Paris.

- What? An emigrant!—exclaimed one of the men disrespectfully—What use is that to us? We have enough of them already.

- But he's a wealthy man.

- Well, that's different—their faces lit up. (Rapacki 1963, II, 25)

More than just an anecdote, this scene gives an insight into the complicated history of migration in nineteenth-century Poland and the perception of so-called emigrants. The actor and writer Wincenty Rapacki recorded it about the playwright Józef Narzyski, and it is therefore likely that much colour has been added in its retelling. Yet it contains a grain of truth. In Kraków at the end of the 1860s (at that time annexed by Austria and regarded as a part of a province of that country known as Galicia) it was possible to hear a variety of languages on the streets. This, however, did not mean that the city was populated by migrants from all over Europe, as the gossip in the street scene suggests. Instead, most of those on the cobbled streets of Kraków were Poles who emigrated via the line of guard and customs posts strung along the border known as the *kordon*. The majority had fought in the Polish national uprisings and had defended themselves against repressive measures in other partitioned Polish lands. Others were returning home impoverished and depleted from exile via Paris, London, and Rome. It is they who are referred to as emigrants in the text cited above.<sup>1</sup>

From the time of the disintegration of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the partition of its territories in 1772–1795 by its aggressive neighbours, Russia, Austria and Prussia, the Poles spent over 120 years (until 1918) split between three different states. They were entirely without agency in the internal politics of the partitioning powers. Borders were drawn between districts of the former Poland and Lithuania, arbitrarily assigning people to a territory. This was not just a matter of revised maps, but also a matter of economic development and a new geopolitical orientation of the partitioned lands: Wielkopolska (in Prussia), Mazowsze and the central region (incorporated into Russia) or Małopolska (in the Habsburg Empire) were subject to regulation and de facto colonial exploitation in isolation from each other. As territories dependent on

<sup>1</sup>For example, participants in the January Uprising of 1863 returning from the Congress Kingdom of Poland (Polish territories that were then under the control of Tsarist Russia) were called emigrants in Galicia. See Śliwicki, II, 190.

different centres of rule, they developed or declined each in their own way. The incompatibility and non-uniformity of the railway network in various regions of Poland, which is visible to this day, offers the best evidence of this. Although the boundaries between the partitioned territories were adjusted, shifted as a result of military interventions or were temporarily invalidated during successive uprisings for Polish national liberation, the fact remains that these borders existed and affected the lives of Poles. Geopolitics fundamentally complicated their legal status and made communication as well as maintaining a cultural community more difficult. Above all, however, these borders were less solid than often suggested and offered cracks through which transnational individual and collective mobility could take place despite border control.

The phrase, 'We have had enough of emigrants' needs to be understood in its political context, but also has a deeper subtext: in the nineteenth century, a large proportion of the population of central and eastern Europe was made up of migrants, who lived on the move, constantly crossing external and internal administrative borders. A good example of this is the author of the quotation that opens this article, Wincenty Rapacki. Born in 1840 in Lipno near Płock, a hundred kilometres north-west of Warsaw, he was a citizen of the Tsarist Empire. He graduated from theatre school in Warsaw but made his breakthrough as a stage performer in the Lithuanian provinces, as well as in the Przemysł Land and in Małopolska (Austrian Galicia). He spent 1865 to 1870 in the Austrian Empire as an actor in the Polish theatre in Kraków. When crossing the Russian-Austrian border, he had to prove that he was not obliged to do military service for the Tsarist authorities. In this way, the border was secured against the uncontrolled outflow of recruits or of people with a suspicious, conspiratorial past. From 1870 onwards, by then an artist with the Warsaw Theatre Directorate, he continued to cross borders when travelling on dozens of occasions between Warsaw, Kraków and Lvov. It is likely that he repeatedly passed customs posts, of which there were fourteen along the lines where Galicia and the Kingdom of Poland (controlled by Russia) met. He travelled everywhere on a Russian passport, which he was obliged to present at each place he stayed. Austrian regulations on freedom of movement were more liberal, so that at the internal border of Galicia and Bukovina, on the way to Czerniowce in 1863, for example, it is likely that no one required Rapacki to present proof of his identity.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> It is a historical curiosity that during the January Uprising, which broke out in 1863 in the Kingdom of Poland and spread to other partitions, Rapacki was appointed as the insurgent chief in Czerniowce (Chernivtsi) in Bukovina.



This text represents an attempt to show the phenomenon of the mobility of actors on the Polish stage in the nineteenth century. I am interested not in the movement of theatre people across the borders of the partitions *per se*, but in what was associated with that movement, and sometimes even preceded and conditioned it: the actors' complicated legal and civic status and the fluid, multi-level self-identification of these artists as potential emigrants. The use of the formulation 'actors on the Polish stage' is deliberate: I am referring to artists of both sexes performing in the Polish theatre (playing in Polish for predominantly Polish audiences), who often came from multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multilingual backgrounds. Some identified entirely with Polish culture, others less so, but all were forced to use passports issued by the authorities of the areas in which they lived. This greatly complicated the issue of their actual spatial migration and made them from the outset people with complex biographies.

The chapter begins by revisiting the categories that are used in humanities research to describe migration processes (transnational migration, internal migration). Recognising the virtues as well as the limitations of these categories and their associated descriptive apparatus, I propose the term 'submigration' to denote the specific mental, social, and political situation of theatre people as citizens of multinational empires. Stretched between several orders of belonging, they consciously chose a double or even triple form of identification, or to put it another way: they migrated between these forms of identification. I use various examples to highlight aspects of this phenomenon, including incompatibilities in passport designations, the legal difficulties of impoverished actors changing their place of residence, the linguistic skills of people living in Polish diasporas and the everyday experience of border control between Austria and Russia. This is not intended to offer an exhaustive account, but instead to outline a framework of migration other than that of international or intra-regional migration.

### EMIGRATION/IMMIGRATION, TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION, SUBMIGRATION

The latest scholarly approaches have expanded the concept of migration and, in some cases, recast it in contradictory forms.<sup>3</sup> It has been noted that the concepts of emigration and immigration are historical and that,

<sup>3</sup> See the account of the state of research and the conceptual map provided by Annemarie Steidl (2021, 1–11).

particularly in the nineteenth century, they were strongly linked to the formation of modern nation-states and to the expansion policies of empires. However, the phenomenon is not limited to large-scale mass population movements superimposed on processes of consolidation and state policies. The notion of transnational (supranational) migration offers a means to move beyond national depictions of population movements. Individuals and groups of people cross political and linguistic barriers to create their own social network, which is cosmopolitan, heterogeneous, and based on professional contacts or artistic values.<sup>4</sup> Theatre professionals in the nineteenth century forged multifaceted relationships in different parts of the globe, and factors such as origin, national identity, and language proved far less important and less differentiating in practice than one might think. Just as the national context did not ultimately define the nature of migration, neither did a closed axis (place of birth vs. place of settlement) limit its trajectory. For some performers, who might be described as permanent 'globetrotters', the connection to a single, 'domesticated' space turned out to be secondary to the exchange of skills, contacts, and experiences, but also to contracts, money, texts, stage buildings and to the search for a new audience. Thus, migration can be called a transterritorial and transcultural mobility in areas of familiarity and strangeness, areas that are not conclusively defined (for example, by ideas of nation and religious community), but that emerge and take shape in various ways at the intersection of multiple orders. After all, some opera artists who travelled the world consciously relinquished any determination of where their home, homeland, and roots were, and they cannot be understood as simply emigrants and immigrants.<sup>5</sup>

Movement within the borders of one country, region, or group of settlements known as 'internal' migration is the opposite of transnational migration, while also being an important complement to it in the history of collective mobility. Internal migration is regarded as more important for the economy and development of societies in the nineteenth century than movement beyond national borders. Microscale migration is movement from one place (of birth or of residence) to another place (of work or of seasonal residence), movement from town to countryside, from

<sup>4</sup> Berenika Szymanski-Düll (2020) provides a description of migration in the theatre and a methodology for researching it through individual biographies.

<sup>5</sup> I rely here on the research presented by Mariola Szydłowska and Agata Łuksza at a meeting in Warsaw under the auspices of the T-MIGRANTS project on 24–25 May 2023.

village to town, from plain to mountain, from agricultural land to industrial land, and from one province to another. Thus, in the nineteenth century, many factory workers, domestic servants, seasonal agricultural workers, itinerant craftsmen (such as wireworkers), highly skilled professionals (civil and naval construction engineers, for example), and most of the actors traditionally operating between permanent theatres and itinerant ensembles were migrants. At least a third of the population of Austria-Hungary at the beginning of the twentieth century migrated (Steidl 2021, 30).<sup>6</sup> Most Polish actors in the nineteenth century circulated professionally between the permanent theatres of Warsaw, Kraków, and Lvov, as each of these theatres offered a complementary path of advancement. Sometimes an artist would spend a decade in Kraków or Lvov and then a decade in Warsaw. Although at the time these cities were in the territories of two states (Austria-Hungary and Russia), in reality the artists were moving within the area inhabited by the Polish community, within the borders of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and did not experience any clear differences in the way they worked or the aesthetics of their productions (Jarząbek-Wasył 2016). Yet, one might ask whether they really did not encounter the realities of border-regimes and migrant experiences.

Both internal migration and transnational micro-mobility and macro-mobility show that movement was the *modus vivendi* for a large group of people. Although figures and maps can illustrate both types of migration, they do not reveal the actual vicissitudes and problems of those affected by migration. In other words, the internal condition of the migrant is also important, which is particularly interesting in the case of performers active in the Polish territories in the second half of the nineteenth century, who (sometimes) had multi-ethnic roots. Many of them were caught up in the complex relationships of upbringing, language, culture, and sense of

<sup>6</sup>Census surveys narrowed down by time and territory show an even greater scale of internal migration of up to two-thirds of the population. In Hungary, '1,034,203 people had left their place of birth between 1881 and 1900, nearly two-thirds or 654,228 of which had migrated internally' (Steidl 2021, 24). Even if, 'Internal out-migration rates were significantly lower in the Austrian east, in the provinces of Galicia and Bukovina [...] People from these borderland territories cannot be described as more sedentary or geographically persistent; rather, they took part in other continental and transatlantic migration processes, most often crossing national borders to neighboring countries or finding their ways to other continents', states Steidl. 'Between the 1870s and 1914, roughly two million Poles left Europe for the direction of the Americas, but even these two million constituted just about one-third of the mass movement of Polish labourers who migrated to other European regions and countries during that period' (2021, 5).

identity during this period and further torn between the polyphonic medium of theatre and the tightening discourse of ethno-national communities. Without claiming to give a full account of these complications, I attempt to show in the following, based on sources (letters, diaries, actors’ accounts), how non-obvious, from the subjective perspective of the actors themselves, was the situation of people who plied the theatre trade in the former Polish territories and circulated within them. Although some had never travelled far, they still carried the stigma of a migrant. At the same time, it is insufficient to describe them as internal (local) migrants in the territorial sense. The nomadism of actors in that era is also a state of mind caused by legal-political (the absence of a state), sociological (changes within a differentiating, yet intermixing, socio-ethnic structure, for example), and cultural circumstances (as a user of several languages and identities and migrating between them). My working term for this is submigration: an internal (not territorial, but mental), however no less real, journey between assimilated or openly antagonistic cultures within a single society that is not obvious to the outside world. This journey took place at the level of individual, subjective remedies, and decisions, as well as responses to external pressures compelling an (impossible) final self-definition (through language, nationality, social origin, place of permanent residence etc.). Submigration means being at the interface of several ethne, languages, forms of collectivity and statuses, and experiencing familiarity and strangeness at home on known ground.

### ‘WHO ARE YOU?’: PLURALISTIC WAYS OF BELONGING

There is a verse in *Katechizm polskiego dziecka* [Guidance for the Polish Child], a patriotic and educational booklet by Władysław Bełza published in Lvov at the beginning of the twentieth century that begins as follows:

Who are you?  
 A little Pole.  
 What is your symbol?  
 The white eagle.  
 Where do you live?  
 Among my own.  
 In what country?  
 On Polish earth. (1901, [3])

This verse is an example of how national consciousness was formed and constructed through strong and expressive signs of belonging. The extent to which it is infused not only by unifying patriotic thought, but also by the reality of the post-partition status quo of Poles is characteristic. When asked about his place and country of residence, the poem's protagonist responds with adjectival forms. He cannot give the name 'Poland' because it does not exist,<sup>7</sup> and he avoids the names of other countries because he does not identify with them. Thus, he lives 'among his own' in the most familiar yet elusive realm of bonds and neighbourhood. The trouble is that both unambiguous Polishness and the much longed for idyllic familiarity did not exist and in any case would have been difficult to write on the passport form of a nineteenth-century emigrant.

Emigration presupposes the existence of a place to which one is originally attached, and which one leaves in favour of a new residence (Szymanski-Düll 2020, 86). Here, the geographical factor would appear fundamental. Travel tickets and stamps in passports confirm the crossing of borders: between forms of settlement (village/town), states, regions, and sometimes continents. Migrants are therefore identified by their country of origin (less often by a province within a country), citizenship, or nationality.<sup>8</sup> However, in 1830–1914, many inhabitants of central and eastern Europe were from conquered territories, whose population was dispersed and lacked independent statehood (such as the Poles, who had lost their state, or the Ruthenians,<sup>9</sup> who had not yet created one and were only then in the process of constituting the Ukrainian nation).<sup>10</sup> While identifying with a particular ethnic and linguistic community, they were also—*de jure*—citizens of multinational empires with a complex and often

<sup>7</sup> But in a later section of the verse the name appears as an object of hope, 'What do you believe in? In Poland I believe'.

<sup>8</sup> At a time of internal passports, which were applied between the provinces of a single state, belonging to a particular region, town, or city was also an identifying sign. Changes in the means of determining from where travellers originated began to be felt in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. While local terms appeared on passports before then, in the second half of the century a national homogenisation began to appear, an 'ideology of national identity assigned to the entire territory of a given state' (Zielińska 2018, 18).

<sup>9</sup> The word 'Ruthenian' (or Rusyn) refers to East-Slavic peoples such as modern-day Ukrainians and their language. The name was commonly used in the nineteenth century.

<sup>10</sup> The stages in the consolidation of legal and identity differences between communities emancipating themselves within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy are presented by Henryk Wereszycki (1975).

bloody history. At the moment of leaving their place of birth, they therefore possessed a double, or sometimes triple, private and official-legal identity. In this way, the dancer Feliks Krzesiński could say of himself that he was a Pole with a Russian passport or, alternatively, a Russian citizen of Polish origin. He was born in 1823 in Warsaw and trained there as a dancer in a Polish ballet company. From the 1850s, he performed with the Tsarist ballet in St Petersburg and, together with his famous sister Matilda, contributed to the success of the company. He died in 1905 in the same city. His career's mature period was linked in its entirety with Russia, while his private life and contacts were strongly attached to the Polish community. On the other hand, Felicjan Feliński (1855–1914), a distinguished director of Polish provincial theatre in the Russian Partition, was born into a Polish-Armenian family in Lvov (Austro-Hungary), and his actual name was Felicjan Passakas. He was therefore, if a defining phrase is sought, a Polish Armenian with an Austrian passport, active in the Russian Partition (Fig. 1).

*Passakas 833*

Eltern heißen:

Czł.-Nr.	Familien- und Vor-Namen.	Stand.	Geburts:			Religion.	Geburts-Ort.	Persönliche Verhältnisse, z. B. bezüglich des Gewerbes u. s. w.
			Tage	Monat	Jahr.			
	<i>Passakas Felicjan Felicjan</i>	<i>Polnisch- Armenien</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>ky Galiciens</i>		
2								
3								
4							<i>Wohnung in St. Petersburg 3 bei Fischel. 15. 5. 82 a. M. f.</i>	

ARCHIWUM PAŃSTWOWE  
W POZNANIU

Fig. 1 Registration card of Feliks Feliński (Passakas), 1880–1881, State Archive in Poznań

Daniel Freudensohn (1847–1931), born in Warsaw to a family of Jewish craftsmen, was a Russian citizen, an actor in the Polish theatre in Galicia, and later a writer. On the stage, he performed under the name Daniel Zgliński. Salomea Kruszelnicka (1873–1952), meanwhile, came from a Polish-Ukrainian family from near Buczacz (Buchach) (in Austria-Hungary), made her debut in Lvov (in the Polish opera), and received her education in Italy. From 1898 to 1902, she performed in Warsaw and later continued her brilliant career abroad—on both sides of the Atlantic. She accentuated different aspects of her biography at different points in her career, but ultimately emphasised her Ukrainianness most strongly. In this she differed entirely from Andrzej Mielewski (1867–1916), an outstanding actor in Kraków and an outstanding theatre director in Łódź. Few people today are aware that he was half-Ruthenian and that his real name was Andrej Sydor. All of these people worked in Polish theatres in the Austrian and Russian Partitions, but the word ‘Pole’ would be just one of many terms attached to their complex identities, which were partly given and partly chosen. To this can be added the local patriotism they cherished: a strong sense of belonging to their place of birth, to their city (Kraków, Lwów-Lemberg-Lviv-Lvov, Warsaw) and sometimes to several centres of activity at once. Generally, in official situations, as well as in crisis situations (such as war),<sup>11</sup> one of these identities, either independently adopted or imposed by oppression and manipulation, dominated.<sup>12</sup> Although artists did not wish to accept such unification, in certain circumstances they were required to make a clear, formalised declaration of where they came from and to where they belonged (Fig. 2).

<sup>11</sup> In 1915, following the advance towards Warsaw of the front in the German-Russian engagements, the Russians forced many Polish actors and directors who had Austrian passports to evacuate to the depths of the Russian interior. In this way, Juliusz Osterwa, Wincenty Drabik, Stanisława Wysocka and others found themselves in Kyiv and Moscow.

<sup>12</sup> Polish painters showing at exhibitions abroad had to agree to be represented by the political colours of Russia, Austria, and Germany. Sometimes, though, completely by chance, they somehow ended up under other colours, ‘In the Belgian hall there are two sculptures by Godebski: a drunken peasant and a Russian peasant girl. Among the Russians, two statues by Cengler...’ wrote Helena Modrzejewska in 1876 (2015, I, 319) of the World Exhibition in Philadelphia. Modrzejewska herself was no less difficult to classify. She crossed the Atlantic as a star of Polish theatres in the three partitions and a citizen of the multinational Austro-Hungarian state. To Poles she was an ardent Polish patriot and to the Americans a European artist with alleged aristocratic connections.

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5. XYLOPHON SOLO..... *Fischer*
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Fig. 2 American playbill announcing Helena Modjeska (Modrzejewska) as a star of the Russian Imperial Theatres and the 'countess Bodzenta', 1878, National Library in Warsaw



## DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN

Even in Austria-Hungary, which was relatively liberal in this respect, the law did not abolish the division between domestic and foreign. Instead, it tended to radicalise the issue of belonging and citizenship. This was felt most acutely in the mundane situations of impoverishment, infirmity, and old age, where what we would today call social security was required. According to the legislation, ‘it was the “hometown” that was responsible for taking care of old-age persons and paupers in instances in which there was no private support available’ (Steidl 2021, 36). However, when could a place be called a “hometown”? Did one have to have been born there or just to have stayed there for a while? If so, for how long? Furthermore, could the hometown be chosen arbitrarily? For actors leading a nomadic lifestyle and regularly changing their place of residence, this was a question of great importance, especially in view of the lack of provision for retirement (of all the permanent theatres in the Polish lands, only the actors of the Warsaw Theatre Directorate benefited from a pension; attempts to introduce a pension fund for artists in Lvov and Kraków were ultimately unsuccessful).

Let us imagine, then, a travelling nineteenth-century artist who, at the end of his life, wishes to settle down in one place and enjoy the privileges of a permanent resident. In Austria-Hungary, ‘Residency was acquired by birth, marriage, or by voluntary presence in a community over the period of ten—and later four—years’ (Steidl 2021, 36). Requirements for a permanent residence also existed in the Tsarist Empire. Antoni Krajewski, who was born around 1810 and educated in Warsaw, spent several decades working in the provinces in itinerant troupes. Towards the end of his life in the 1880s, he became impoverished, so he returned to the capital of the Russian Partition seeking help there. However, the authorities in his hometown apparently decided that, like most beggars, he was *persona non grata* unless he paid for a residence card and submitted the relevant application in advance. A friend from the Warsaw theatre helped him for a while, but then urged him to resettle elsewhere, which Krajewski finally did, settling in a village near Warsaw.<sup>13</sup> By the end of his life, this veteran

<sup>13</sup> ‘Krajewski, the fool! Why didn’t he resettle—I already told him. When he takes a rouble from me for an application, he disappears somewhere and he pays for residence cards’ (Chomiński 1855, MS).

of the provincial theatre was not only economically but also legally a nobody, a man without an address.

No less legally delicate, though more fortunate, was the situation of another doyen of theatre in the provinces: Anastazy Trapszo. He was born in 1832 in Zamość (Russian Partition) but spent four decades directing travelling companies throughout the country. He was already an old actor when he settled in Austria-Hungary, first in Lvov (in 1892) and later in Kraków (from 1894 until his death in 1898). Although he had a great deal of teaching experience, he was never a star performer, and by 1894 his age and illnesses argued for a well-deserved retirement. However, itinerant and private theatres offered no pensions. In addition, as a Russian subject, he could not count on recognition of citizenship and social assistance in Galicia (which he would probably have been denied, for other reasons, in Warsaw also). Tadeusz Pawlikowski, a Kraków theatre director, was aware of this when he engaged Trapszo, which, considering the latter's poor health and waning artistic powers, he did more for Trapszo's survival than for the benefit of his theatre. It was thus glaringly apparent that even a person who was fairly well-known in a place, as Trapszo was in Kraków, could easily, were it not for a hospitable theatre institution that guaranteed him care in old age under the guise of employment, have ceased to be a fully-fledged citizen of the city and instead become a foreigner not permitted to enjoy the privileges of the local community. Similarly, someone who moved around a lot and who had no permanent place of residence such as the Varsovian Krajewski was, towards the end of his life, considered by the Tsarist authorities to be a 'non-local', a 'foreigner', and an 'emigrant'—even though he was seeking refuge in his native city. The right to move freely, and thus become a citizen of many cities and a resident of different countries, did not make life any easier for actors, and nomadism became a heavy burden towards the end of their careers. The economic woes of not belonging to a single, specific place affected many, but not all, actors. On the other hand, all of them—those who were settled and those who were mobile—faced the challenge of existing and communicating in a space containing several languages.

### MULTILINGUALISM FROM THE CRADLE

Migration is associated with gradually acquired multilingualism, with the necessity of learning and using a language other than one's own. However, the inhabitants of the partitioned Polish lands, irrespective of their origin

(intelligentsia, nobility, or craftsmen), and regardless of how they defined themselves, were condemned to speak at least two languages. It is telling that even a general assistant at the Warsaw Theatres, himself illiterate, advised his son, the future actor Kazimierz Kamiński (1865–1928), to ‘pay attention to the Russian language, because without it the whole world would be closed to him’ (Kamiński 1963a, II, 163). Later in his career, Kamiński did indeed travel to play (in a Polish ensemble) in St Petersburg, Liepāja, Jelgava, Riga, Moscow, Kharkiv, Tbilisi, and Kamienskoje, but he also ventured as far as the United States (Chicago). Before people like Kamiński potentially assumed the status of emigrants by going abroad, they already spoke their native language (in mixed families, sometimes two native languages), plus the language of the state and the language of the cultural environment (of a theatre or school, for example).

It is worth noting that these languages were sometimes in conflict, and the hegemony of the official language varied depending on the current political context. In a situation of changing borders and geopolitical arrangements, Warsaw was, for example, successively Prussian (after 1795), Polish under the protectorate of France (in Napoleonic times in 1807–1815 as the Duchy of Warsaw, an ersatz Polish state), and Russian, but as the formally separate Congress Kingdom (1815–1830). Following the two uprisings of 1831 and 1863, the city was incorporated into Russia and heavily Russified. During this period, Kraków belonged to Austria (1772–1807), to the ‘Polish’ Duchy of Warsaw (1807–1815), was a Free City as the so-called Republic of Kraków (1815–1845) and was finally incorporated into the Austrian Empire after 1845 and, for a time, heavily Germanised. From the late 1860s, it enjoyed relative cultural and national freedom (autonomous Galicia). When, at the end of the 1850s, the young Helena Modrzejewska was studying German in Kraków and considering performing on the German stage, such a decision would not have been politically neutral. This was the so-called Bach era (named after Alexander von Bach, Minister of the Interior), which had prevailed for a decade and involved intensified oppression of Poles and a policy of Germanisation. Under these circumstances, performing in German could have seen this ambitious artist ostracised in her native Polish environment.

Similar tensions, but also propitious conjunctures, were exploited by actors, who treated the possibility of matching language to context as their trump card: a tool of cultural mimicry and at the same time of professional mobility. Knowledge of a second language may for some have meant the chance to perform in a foreign-language troupe, on a foreign-language

stage, but it was also useful in bilingual performances (when two national ensembles joined forces, most often when faced with a bankruptcy crisis). In actors' work behind the scenes, their knowledge of one, two, or more languages permitted various tactics of assimilation and resistance. In this way, hidden animosities and disputes were covered up or played out. Aleksander Myszuga, a singer born near Lvov into a Ukrainian family, was employed in Warsaw in the 1880s. In 1891, he appeared as a witness in the trial for the murder of Maria Wisnowska (an actress shot dead by her lover, who was a Tsarist officer), firmly stating that, despite having lived in the capital for several years, he did not understand Russian and would not swear the court oath in that language. He also insisted that, as a Uniat, he could not take the oath before an Orthodox priest (Tuszyńska 1990, 241). This was an act of political resistance to the Tsarist authorities, which ended in his expulsion from Warsaw. Even more significant and ambiguous is an episode involving Salomea Kruszelnicka, which the Warsaw actor Paweł Owerłło recalls as follows:

Kruszelnicka enjoyed tremendous popularity and recognition among Warsaw audiences, which she later repaid with a measure of unpleasantness. In Milan in the company of her sister, she met Adam Didur and Julian Hof[f]man. Their greetings concluded, she began to converse with Didur in Ukrainian (Didur was a Ruthenian)<sup>14</sup> and addressed Hof[f]man in that language too. Hof[f]man replied that he did not understand Ruthenian, 'But you speak excellent Polish', he added. To which she replied, 'If you do not understand Ruthenian, I will not speak Polish, I am a Ruthenian'. And she continued to conduct her conversation with Didur in Ukrainian. Some time later, she met Hof[f]man in Warsaw. She greeted him in Polish, at which Hof[f]man replied in Italian, turned promptly on his heels, and departed. (Owerłło 1957, 220)<sup>15</sup>

All three of the people mentioned here were at ease in both Polish and Italian (like Kruszelnicka and Didur, Hoffman also had a singing career in

<sup>14</sup>This is in fact incorrect. Didur was born near Sanok and mixed with Ruthenians. Those he made friends with included Mikołaj Lewicki, director of the Lvov Opera, who was Ukrainian by origin (Golik-Szarawarska 2020).

<sup>15</sup>In line with other contemporary biographers, Anna Korzeniowska-Bihun (2012) stresses Kruszelnicka's independence, Ukrainian patriotism, and civil courage. It appears, however, that she selected various strategies of identity, at times negotiating between adopted cultures (*natione polona, arte Italiana*), at times exercising a degree of political and economic opportunism, and at times pursuing a policy of open confrontation with the Polish community.

Italy, under the name of Gelmaro), but only two of them were also comfortable in Ruthenian/Ukrainian. However, they found it difficult to agree that one of these languages should be their common and neutral tool of communication. Much more than being a matter of conversation (or even politeness), the choice of language raised issues of origin, the dominant culture and escaping its influence, and imposing one's own rules on the game depending on the context. It is also apparent that the term 'Polish artist' was sometimes confusing, full of non-obviousness and underlying tensions. Kruszelnicka supported the Ukrainian national movement and its aspiration for its own state, a stance that, in her case, implied an antagonistic relationship with her former partners from the Polish opera stage and a fervent anti-Polishness as a way of avoiding a hierarchical relationship.

### BORDER CROSSING

The difficulty of detecting the national identity of certain artists is one thing, but the question of the mobility of Polish theatre actors between the partitions is not straightforward either. Polish acting troupes operating in the former Polish territories had their customary itineraries, which criss-crossed the borders of the partitioned states. In the second half of the nineteenth century, for example, a Kraków company travelled to Poznań (in the Prussian Partition) to perform in the summer. Furthermore, individual Polish performers willingly travelled from Warsaw to Kraków and Lvov and vice versa. Everywhere they were performing for 'their' audiences. It is difficult to consider this as a phenomenon of international and intercultural migration. The artists went abroad, but to their compatriots, and together they inhabited the same linguistic realm. Scholars of the history of Poland in the nineteenth century have pointed out that the Polish experience of the partition borders amounted to the movement of 'fellow countrymen in their fellow country' (Zielińska 2018, 33). On both sides of the border, there was solidarity in aiding Poles and cooperation in smuggling people and goods. Help was not only given to conspirators and insurgents, but a cross-border community bond was maintained, which in crisis situations even took the form of an underground state organised on both sides of the border. It should be stressed that there was actually one border. It was more than 2000 kilometres long and stretched between the cultures of East and West, between Russia and its two neighbouring states: Prussia (from Klaipėda/Memel in East Prussia to Mysłowice in Upper



**Fig. 3** The Three Emperors' Corner: Szczakowa, Granica (Maczki), Mysłowice. In the middle the railway bridge on Biała Przemsku (Warsaw-Vienna railroad), a postcard printed in 1903–1905, National Library in Warsaw

Silesia) and Austria (from Mysłowice to Chernivtsi in Podolia) (Zielińska 2018) (Fig. 3).

It was a paradox that, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the most heavily guarded border crossings were those between Warsaw and Kraków, while those between Warsaw and Moscow were no longer in use. So it was, that Poles travelling to St Petersburg from Warsaw did not formally cross any borders.

In Austria-Hungary it was possible to move freely between provinces and to other countries, except for Russia and Turkey: 'Beginning in the 1860s, Austria-Hungary's population was allowed to move freely around the empire's territory without identification documents, and even into other Western European countries and overseas. It was only for journeys to the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire that an official visa was required. Passports for internal travel had been abolished in 1857, and an act in the Constitution (*Staatsgrundgesetz*) of 1867, which applied only to Imperial Austria, entitled every inhabitant to a free choice of residence' (Steidl 2021, 36). Steidl states elsewhere in the same work (34), 'The

Russian border was one of the most difficult to cross in Europe'. Russian regulations for personal documents were equally strict. In the Tsarist state, obtaining a passport required much effort and money and was used by the authorities as a means of harassing potential rebels. Before the First World War, travellers arriving on Tsarist territory were obliged to carry not only a passport from their country of origin, but also a visa issued by a Russian diplomatic agency. Tsarist citizens were compelled to be in possession of a passport any time they crossed the external border. It is for this reason that the processes involved in travelling to Kraków or Poznań involved negotiating the status quo of newcomers and natives, as well as a kind of cultural and linguistic shock (Figs. 4, 5 and 6).

Newcomers from the Russian Partition to the Prussian and Austrian Partitions, or vice versa, invariably encountered the *kordon*,<sup>16</sup> which was a



**Fig. 4** Russian soldiers on the border between Russia and Austria-Hungary in Rawa Ruska, a postcard printed by Ftr. S. Schoffer, Lwów 1903, National Library in Warsaw

<sup>16</sup>For the border area, English has the word frontier, which is distinct from border, as in the border of a state, and from boundary, which denotes a border in a broad sense, including in the case of social divisions. See Balawajder 2013, 45.

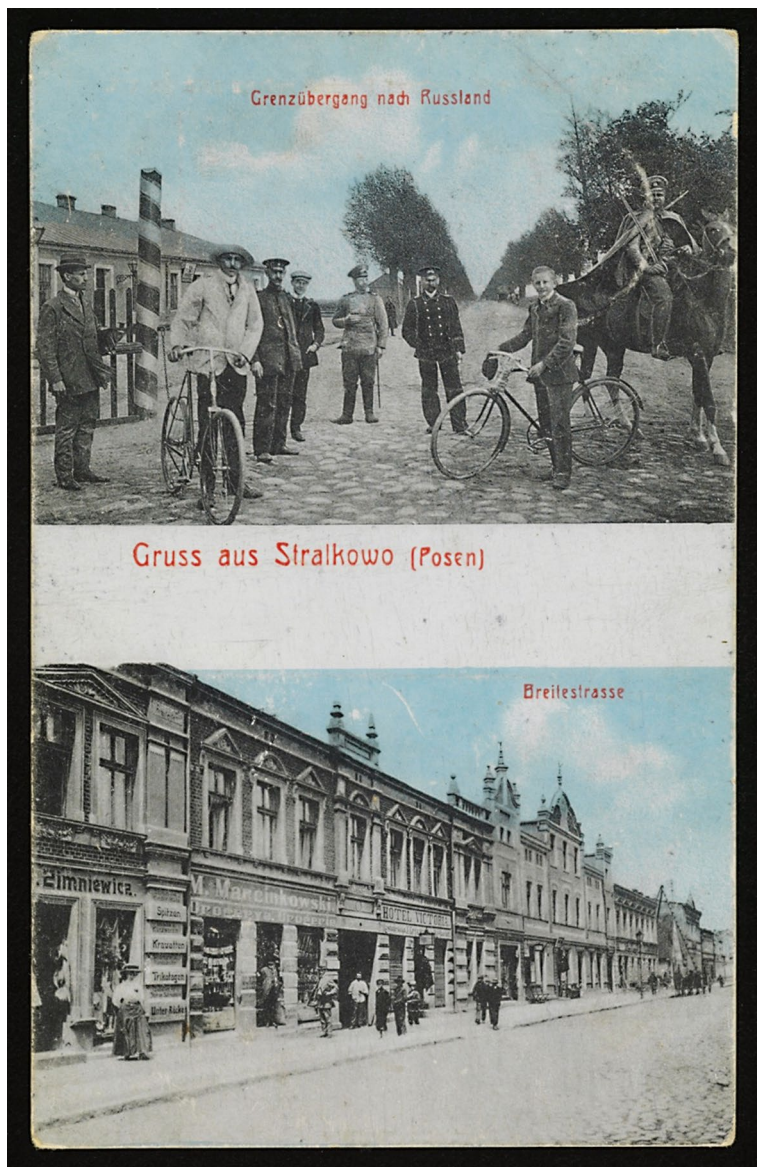


Fig. 5 On the border between Russia and Germany in Strzałkowo (Słupca), a postcard printed by M. Marcinkowski, 1906, National Library in Warsaw





**Fig. 6** Russian border post in Słupca/Strzałkowo, a postcard printed by J. Mornel, 1910–1915, National Library in Warsaw

guarded boundary dotted with customs posts ('customs chambers') and political guard posts, around which stretched the sensitive 'border' area. Where the border crossed an overland route, such as that of postal stage-coaches, a strip of no-man's land was demarcated, with customs and guard posts on either side. When the border was crossed by rail (Fig. 3), the key place was the station,<sup>17</sup> where the travellers were subject to random checks. Once selected, a passenger could be detained (forced to interrupt their journey) for as long as the border police saw fit. It was possible to circumvent these oppressive and burdensome monitoring measures by resorting to corruption. But without money to buy themselves out, without the right document, or because of compromising material, passengers could become 'stuck' for days as if in extraterritorial limbo, have their luggage

<sup>17</sup>It is worth noting, however, that the aim of the development of railways in the partitioned lands was to separate them rather than to connect them. The best example is the section of the border between Prussia and Russia running through Wielkopolska, which no railway line crossed until the end of the nineteenth century. Direct travel by rail from Poznań to Warsaw was not possible.

stolen as a result of searches for goods prohibited in the destination territory, enter a zone of non-existence, lose their identity, or change their identity.

This characteristic of the border was deliberately exploited by men fleeing from the army. First, they would go to another partition and later return home under a changed name and hence with a false passport (this was much easier than today, as passports then contained only a narrative description rather than a portrait or a photograph). One such example was the actor Teodor Konopka, who adopted the stage name Teodor Roland after escaping from the Russian army to Galicia. The opposite was true of Ludwik Sosnowski, who 'fled from the Austrian army to the Kingdom, from where he returned with the surname Solski' (Śliwicki 1963, II, 203). It was under this name that he became one of the best character actors, continuing to work until his death in 1955.

Returning to the theme of the border, although it ran between formerly integral parts of the territory of a single state, it pulled travellers into a zone of suspension, subjecting them to tests of legality—especially during periods of uprisings and revolutionary unrest. For some, it offered the opportunity to escape, to become someone else and to change their identity, while it placed others—even innocent travellers—under suspicion. In other words, the border made people strangers in a seemingly familiar territory. For a Pole to meet a Pole in a neighbouring state, one of them had to cross a foreign, militarised space, subject to rigorous customs checks of goods and currency and to become, in this sense and for a short time, a foreigner at the border. These journeys were often attended by risk and uncertainty, a lack of information, and an experience of alienation caused by being confronted with the apparatus of police control.<sup>18</sup> The circumstances of Modrzejewska's expulsion from Tsarist Warsaw in 1895 represent the most famous and absurd example of this political alienation. Three years earlier, she had addressed a women's congress in the United States with a speech on the position of Polish women under Russian rule. Its anti-Tsarist, patriotic tone reached the authorities of the Kingdom and prompted repressive repercussions. As *persona non grata*, she was asked (within 24 hours) to discreetly leave the city she had visited many times

<sup>18</sup> An apparatus, let us add, that was nationally alien. For example, following the incorporation of the Congress Kingdom into Russia, not only were Russian customs regulations in force, but from 1850 only native-born Russians were allowed to serve as customs officers. Before that, border posts had been staffed by Polish officers.

without hindrance, and which had consistently welcomed and bidden her farewell with honours. This time, she was to leave immediately without seeing or saying goodbye to anyone and, thanks to the Tsarist decision-makers, the mobile ‘border’ now included the space around the artist.

Difficulties crossing the border affected the continuity of repertoire and theatre operations. On 23 May 1899, the Kraków daily ‘*Głos Narodu*’ [Voice of the Nation] (No. 114) reported, ‘at the city theatre, due to the non-arrival of Ms Siemaszkowa, who was detained at the Russian border, there was not only a change of programme yesterday, [...] but a considerable delay in starting’. As can be seen, detentions of actresses and actors during border crossings were so routine that they required little comment or explanation, but for the actors and actresses themselves they were sometimes an ordeal.

The actress Irena Solska’s (1877–1958) *Pamiętnik* [diary] contains the following dispatch from migrational limbo:

Returning from Lublin I had an unpleasant adventure. At Radziwiłłów/Radyvyliv—a border station<sup>19</sup>—passports and travel permits were inspected. They kept my passport because my uncle had not completed the necessary formalities. I sent messages, but no answer was forthcoming. I was very uneasy. Lots of military; where to spend the night? Found a miserable night’s rest at the station with some labourers. In the morning—still no news. Luckily an old lady with two girls approached me. I told her about my predicament and that I was disquieted because there were a lot of officers. This lady was also waiting for some message. She told me that she would stay with me because it was easy to get into trouble. Around noon the colonel invited me to his office and informed me—as calmly as you like—that the permit had been there since yesterday, and that he had detained me because ... his wife is on holiday, he was bored, that he was looking for me in the evening (Where did you spend the night?), that he now saw that I had someone to look after me. He returns the papers, says we’ll see each other in Lvov at the theatre. The scoundrel knew who I was and dared to stop me because he was bored! (Solska 1978, 79)

It is not clear from the account in which language the Russian officer (and theatre lover) and the Polish actress (born in Warsaw) spoke: Polish or Russian? Or perhaps they alternated between the two? Despite the

<sup>19</sup>Radziwiłłów/Radyvyliv in the Rivne Province was a border station of the South-Eastern Railway on the Russian side. Its counterpart on the Austrian side was the station at Brody.

political difference and the thorny circumstances in which Solska, traveling alone, found herself, an understanding was nevertheless possible, thanks in part to a common point of reference (in this case, a knowledge of theatre). One can, however, imagine similar situations in which language became a tool for emphasising differences.

### NATIVE LANGUAGE

A shared native tongue could sometimes be an alienating or merely a differentiating factor. When arriving in Warsaw, a Polish actor from Lithuania was still in motion in a single community of his own people. He would thus not be exposed to any migratory shock, even though he was actually arriving from Russia, into which Lithuania was being incorporated at a time of intense efforts to erase Polish and Lithuanian heritage in the region. And yet, here too, there were interesting frictions and misunderstandings, including, for example, those based specifically on language. By the 1830s, 'Lithuanians', as Poles from Lithuania were sometimes called, were already regarded as hampered by their Vilnius accents, and actors from this region were forced to change their way of speaking or give up their acting careers. Emil Surewicz, who was born in 1805 in Vilnius, was one of the most outstanding actors on the local stage until the 1850s. Following the closure of the Polish theatre in Vilnius, he found work with the Warsaw theatres. At first, he played leading roles (including Hamlet) and served as a director in the drama company. Over time, his presence became limited to bit parts and to serving in the technical role of stage inspector, which was created especially for him. Władysław Krogulski claimed that 'in addition to his very advanced age, [he] was hampered mainly by the accent he had acquired on the Vilnius stage. So the poor man had to relinquish this as well, and from then on, he became somehow mystical, closed in on himself, speaking almost not at all' (2015, 588). The silence of Surewicz is hardly surprising, since the singer Mieczysław Kamiński arrived in Warsaw in 1859 with a high opinion of the linguistic norms prevailing there. He particularly admired '[t]he clarity of speech here, the beauty of enunciation, and the correctness of spelling and expressions, which father had to work so hard on in Galicia' (Kamiński 1963b, I, 312). Just as the Vilnius accent grated in Warsaw, so did the Lvov accent in Kraków. This is demonstrated by comments made following the Kraków première of *Dziady* [*Forefathers' Eve*] on 31 October 1901. The action of the second part of Adam Mickiewicz's poetic drama takes place in a church

where a village mob summons ghosts, ‘Two angels appear on the altar, high up, right up near the wall. The whole scene would be good, were it not for the Lvov accent of one of the Angels’, one reviewer complained (Limanowski 1992, 35).

Regional dialectal differences in Polish were accepted when limited to the ethnographic characterisation of characters in comedies, but when transferred to Hamlets and Romeos they hampered reception. They also impeded efforts to establish a single standard of the Polish language, which the codifiers of linguistic heritage were keen to do at the time.<sup>20</sup> But the language lived and developed in its own way. The melody, lexis, phrases and expressions of Polish, shaped over several decades of Tsarist repression in the Russian Partition, sounded different from the language of the Poles in Galicia or Wielkopolska, which in turn was dependent on German influences and local borrowings and, especially in the Poznań region, on the closed loop of repressed Polish, in which its forms were preserved.<sup>21</sup> Differences in the influence exercised in the various partitions were compounded by social differences. The language of peasants from various regions of old Poland, for example, sounded strange to Poles unused to it. In 1862, the writer Teodor Tomasz Jeż, who hailed from Volhynia, was unable to understand smugglers from Małopolska, who pronounced the phones *c*, *dz*, *s*, and *z* instead of *cz*, *dż*, *sz*, and *ź* (Zielińska 2018). Sometimes it was necessary to translate certain things ‘from Polish into Polish’ in order for Poles from different partitions to understand each other. In this sense, users of Polish were migrating into a different space of that language—one with a slightly foreign, and not always comprehensible tinge. ‘No doubt he wants at acting (a Galician expression, instead of “he wants to be an actor”)?’, Mieczysław Kamiński explained in his diary to his potential readers. An insight into the work on the 1898 stage copy of Gabriela Zapolska’s *Tamten* [That One] shows how much effort the author, Zapolska, concealed beneath the pseudonym Józef Maskoff, and the director, Tadeusz Pawlikowski, had to make to preserve the flavour of

<sup>20</sup> Attitudes to the purity and precision of speech also differed between Warsaw and Kraków. There was a reason why Warsaw actors settling in Kraków in the second half of the nineteenth century gained a reputation as masters of pronunciation and provided teaching in this area (Józef Kotarbiński, Leon Stępowski).

<sup>21</sup> Stefan Turski, who visited these regions, noted not only a great many linguistic oddities, but also remarked, ‘The people of Wielkopolska have not assimilated the latest inventions of their native tongue. Everybody spoke in the way they were taught to in the confines of their homes’ (1963, II, 240).

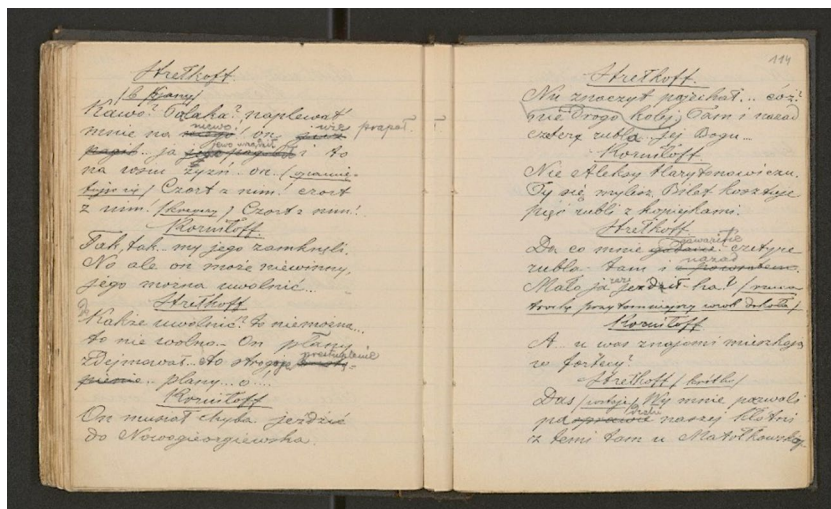


Fig. 7 Corrections to a text imitating Russian vocabulary in the Kraków copy of *Tamten* [*That One*], 1898, Jagiellonian Library

the real Warsaw and its customs, as well as aspects of the Russian language for characters of that nationality, which benefited from finely polished nuances of word and voice. For example, the Galician ‘*cwiker*’ [pince-nez] was altered to ‘*binokle*’, the tankard ‘*okocimer*’ to the Warsaw ‘*Haberbursch*’, ‘*troszkę*’ [little] to ‘*niemnożko*’, and ‘*z powrotem*’ [once more, again, return] to ‘*nazad*’ (Zapolska 1898, MS) (Fig. 7).

## SUMMARY

Our discussion leads to a single, somewhat contrary conclusion: political, linguistic, custom, and legal overlaps and collisions meant that Polish theatre artists working in the partitions exhibited the traits of migrants, even if they never became, in the full sense of the word, emigrants. They were accustomed to being on the move, existing at the intersection of multiple identities (public-legal, private-ethnic, religious, national) and prepared not only to use, but also to deliberately, pragmatically, and politically choose from a number of languages. Even when they were operating among Poles, when they crossed the *kordon* they felt their presence there in a space of cumulative foreignness where the apparatus of control

functioned (it is possible that it was this feeling that heightened the search for an ideal Polish community across and beyond the *kordon*, sustaining the imaginarium of national unity). If, at the same time, these people decided to actually emigrate to more distant lands for a while, such as Julian Hoffmann and Salomea Kruszelnicka to Italy, Daniel Zgliński-Freudensohn to Leipzig (to study philology), Gabriela Zapolska to Paris (in the hope of having a career in French), and Kamiński to Chicago, they became migrants, but second-degree migrants. As demonstrated in this chapter, I propose calling the first degree of migration, that of being between different forms of identity and self-determination, submigration. To summarise, submigration denotes mobility not in space, but within consciousness. It is the multi-layeredness of levels of self-understanding and being understood by others that make up an individual's origin and belonging and their interchangeable functioning in different linguistic-ethnic-national environments—sometimes without having to change citizenship or meeting the requirements for obtaining a passport. The sub-migrant remains suspended between two (and sometimes more) languages and cultures that live side by side and are sometimes even in conflict, while the bearers or users of these languages and cultures strive to maintain both, using the tools of communication of these different flows. It is important to note, however, that choosing the visibility of one form of identification means hiding and remaining silent about other identities, which might be less comfortable or controversial at a given moment. Submigration has much in common with the delegation to the underground of that part of the self which is not currently of use, which is inactive.<sup>22</sup> I am not claiming that this condition affected all actors, but it is highly likely that it characterised people who concealed themselves under two or three names, hid behind two biographies, adopted different social and linguistic disguises and carried multiple passports, such as Kruszelnicka, Myszuga, Freudensohn, or Passakas. It is plausible that the theatre offered these inwardly and outwardly divided people, these migrants within the heterogeneous Polish society, a constant performance of identity.

Translated by Mark Aldridge.

<sup>22</sup>The cases of impoverished old actors, such as Krajewski and Trapszo, are linked to the theme of submigration through the experience of the gap between, on the one hand, their nomadic lifestyle and the rights and civil liberties that made it possible and, on the other, their low economic status and de facto condemnation to homelessness in a place ostensibly homely and familiar.

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PART II

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Theatre Migration in the Wake of  
Settler Colonialism



# Travelling Along ‘Untrodden Tracts’: Joachim Stocqueler and the Making of Early Colonial Theatre in India

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## INTRODUCTION: BRINGING THE EMPIRE CLOSER OR IMAGES FROM THE ‘ROUTE OF THE “OVERLAND MAIL”’

Colonial ship journeys are often enigmatic accounts—both synchronous through the eyes of the voyager and asynchronous in writing a historiography of theatre migrants. Landscapes and waterscapes come together in the liminal space of the ship or ship journeys to challenge our land-centric perceptions of disciplines. Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts (2012) have interrogated the remits of understanding liminality in this sense. In their interdisciplinary approach, they find the interconnections of liminality and landscape through categories of space, place, and identity. How do such interconnections of liminality and landscape help us in writing histories of colonial theatre migrants? Do fleeting images from colonial steamers at sea resemble fleeting images from the theatre itself? As Bishnupriya Dutt

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writes in recounting histories of English actresses in colonial Calcutta, ‘The history of the theatre, particularly the theatre worked out within colonial space, created the strategy by which distant spaces could be dramatized within familiar spaces’ (2009, 314). Perhaps the accounts of the ‘Overland Mail’<sup>1</sup> to India from Britain and accompanying sketches help us probe such questions and understand how landscapes contributed to theatre scenography or theatre-making as well as ways of ‘seeing’. More importantly, these accounts will also be a prelude to the perceptions and practices of colonial theatre-makers and migrants in the nineteenth century (Fig. 1).

**Fig. 1** Joachim Hayward Stocqueler, 1881, Portrait by C. Grant, *Lithographic sketches of the public characters of Calcutta*, Wikimedia Commons



<sup>1</sup>The postal route of the overland mail from Britain to India has a long history; however, it was formalised in a contract between the British government and the Peninsular & Oriental Co., at the intervention of Lt. Thomas Waghorn. Under this contract, The East India Company’s navy ‘conveyed the mail from Suez to Bombay’. Joachim Stocqueler left India for good in 1841 on the P&O Company’s paddle steamer called *Hindustan*. The first regular service between Southampton and Calcutta started on 24 September 1842, carrying both passengers and mail. For further details; see E. F. Hurt, ‘A Brief Survey of the “Overland” Mail Route’; and Colin Such, ‘Thomas Waghorn and the Overland Mail Route’.

Joachim Hayward Stocqueler (1801–1886) was a prolific traveller, journalist, writer, and theatre enthusiast.<sup>2</sup> He arrived in India in 1824 after leaving the British army and obtaining a clerical job in Bombay. He left for England briefly, returning to Bombay in 1827. Thereafter, he left Bombay again in 1831 to commence a long journey via Persia to Europe, which formed the narrative of his *Fifteen Months Pilgrimage Through Untrodden Tracts in Khuzistan and Persia* (published in London in 1832). He returned to India (Calcutta) in 1833 and spent a considerable number of years in the city only to return to England for good in 1843. Eventually, after living in London for 16 years, he moved to North America and lived intermittently between the two continents until his death in 1886. In thinking of Joachim Stocqueler as a theatre migrant, I primarily take his multifarious journeys and temporary lives into account. While Stocqueler's timeline of journeys and temporary residences do not conform to the understanding of migration delineated by strictures of nation-states, his 'migrant' status does conform to the characteristic mobility and temporary lives that guided his writings and theatre-making. Early colonial theatre in India, as we will see in the later sections, was much shaped by the migrant lives of theatre-makers including English actresses. In reading Stocqueler's life as a theatre migrant (in relation to the actresses as well), my aim is to understand the site of the theatre itself as built on mobilities, instabilities and as a phenomenon of passing-by, just as Stocqueler shows in his multiple journeys, both on water and on land.

In 1850, Stocqueler produced two related accounts of the 'Overland Companion'. The first one—*Route of the Overland Mail to India: From Southampton to Calcutta*—is a personal account of a long ship journey. Stocqueler's writing is enlivened by the sketches of multiple landscapes such as Cintra, Gibraltar, Bay of Biscay, Malta, Cairo, Jeddah, Sri Lanka, and finally, Calcutta. The second account—*The Overland Companion*—is a guide for the traveller embarking on a voyage to India via Egypt. A third account—*The Diorama of The Ocean Mail to India and Australia*<sup>3</sup>—was published in 1854, with similar vivid presentations of places such as Cape Verde, Sierra Leone, Cape Town, Mauritius, the Maldives, Pulo Penang,

<sup>2</sup>For a detailed account of the life and works of J. H. Stocqueler, see Audrey T Carpenter (2018).

<sup>3</sup>A *Hand-book to Mr. Albert Smith's Entertainment* (published in 1850) details in its programme of entertainment that the machinery for the diorama was given by Mr Solman of the Lyceum Theatre, indicating the theatre's close ties with the colonial panoramas and dioramas.

Singapore, and others; the music, as the title page indicates, was composed by Mr Rophino Lacy and the descriptive lectures themselves by Mr Stocqueler. John Plunkett (2017, 47) writes of the dioramas, such as ‘The Overland Mail’, that they were first included in the annual pantomime shows at Drury Lane Theatre in December 1839:

It was, however, two Overland Mail dioramas which opened in 1850 that did most to popularise the route in the public imagination; the first was *The Route of the Overland Mail to India, from Southampton to Calcutta*, which opened at the Royal Gallery of Illustration, Regent Street, in Easter 1850. It was almost immediately followed by the opening of Albert Smith’s Overland Mail at Willis’s Public Rooms, St James’s Square.

The sensorial imaginations and depictions of landscapes mark the accounts of Stocqueler’s ship journeys. Note, for example, the olfactory and visual references in his description of the Maldives and Ceylon in *The Overland Companion*:

Persons with lively imaginations have affirmed that, as they leave the vicinity of the Maldives, they begin to scent the spicy gales blown from the shores of Ceylon. Be that as it may, it is certain that, a few hours after passing the cluster of islets, we approach the beautiful island, and it then soon becomes visible from the deck [...] The high spice lands rise gradually from the shore, and present a magnificent *coup d’œil* of trees of large dimensions, covered with rich and varied foliage. Cinnamon, nutmegs and coffee, form the staple of Ceylon. (Stocqueler 1850a, 56–57)

Added to the European colonial perception of ‘native’ geographies was the sense of pride in conquest. Stocqueler’s tone in these accounts is predominantly nationalistic, boldly announcing the prowess of the British army in ousting various preceding colonial powers such as the Portuguese, Dutch, and French. Material transformations in this polycolonial strife are also captured in Stocqueler’s voice as he indicates the changes of place and object names underlining the stamp of colonial possession. How does this nationalistic tone correspond to performances onstage? In *Empire and Popular Culture*, John Griffiths writes, ‘The visualisation of Empire and its incorporation within popular culture became more noticeable after 1851, and remained a feature of British Society until at least the outbreak of the Second World War’ (2022, 27). The ‘spectorial lust’ or spectacle as the ‘instrument of the British Empire’, as Griffiths suggests, therefore characterises Stocqueler’s visualisations from the ship(s) (2022, 27). Predecessors

of the diorama, such as the panorama and cyclorama, had already been imparting a sense of experiencing 'live' the colonial geographical landscapes of the East. The diorama incorporated an imperial dimension signalling also a time of the Great Exhibition in London (1851) miniaturising, exoticising, and exhibiting the colonised subjects, flora, and fauna.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, Stocqueler's descriptions of approaching the banks of Calcutta—the imperial capital—correspond to the imperial dimension of familiarising the unfamiliar by comparison to familiar places:

The approaches to the metropolis of British India, about ten miles below Calcutta, rival in picturesque beauty the banks of the Thames in the vicinity of Richmond. The villas at Garden Reach, Bishop's College, the botanical gardens, &c., present so many attractive and interesting objects, that the mind is at once prepossessed in favour of the "gorgeous East." [...] Calcutta is justly called the "City of Palaces." [...] There is no land view which more powerfully impresses the beholder than does Calcutta. (1850b, 62)

Stocqueler concludes the *Overland Companion* with a sense of proximity to 'moving objects' that constitute 'native' inhabitants in their quotidian existence, colonial officials, and transportations, and the 'hargeela' (adjutant), a tall bird that mingles in perfect harmony with the 'natives' and yet scavenges from them. The latter becomes a metaphor for British imperialism itself as Stocqueler's 'contemplation of this varied scene' of Calcutta (1850b, 63) imparts diorama-like or scenographic qualities to the description. How did Stocqueler, a theatre migrant to the colonial centre of Calcutta (as well as Bombay) transfer these visualisations to the theatre? Moreover, how did Stocqueler's multiple lives as journalist, playwright, theatre-maker, and so on inform his life as a short-term theatre migrant in colonial India? In the following section, I turn to his *Memoirs as a Journalist* (1873), which he describes as 'the truth of the apophthegm concerning rolling stones in their search after the moss'.

#### MEMOIRS AS A JOURNALIST: TWIN VOCATIONS OF THEATRE-MAKING AND JOURNALISM IN THE COLONY

European theatre-making in colonial India, especially in the urban centre of Calcutta, ensued and continued amidst varying attitudes towards indigenous performance practices. Stocqueler's accounts of British India, as he writes in his *Hand-Book* (1854), for 'the stranger, the traveller, the resident' testify to this attitude towards the entertainments of the Indians. In a section entitled 'Amusements of the People' (26), he writes:

There are few public entertainments among the natives. They do not worship Terpsichore; they do not sing, but regale themselves with the performances of a certain class of dancing, or nautch girls, who go through a series of pantomimic evolutions to the accompaniment of their own songs and a trio of sitars, or rude violins, played by bearded auxiliaries. A more monotonous exhibition can scarcely be imagined; but it suits the drowsy and inactive genius of the Hindoo, and is therefore much patronized, especially upon the occasion of great religious festivals, marriage ceremonies, &c. These *bayadères*, with the jugglers who are wonderfully expert; snake-charmers, wrestlers, tumblers, fire-works, kite-flying, illuminations, puppet-shows, and occasional dramas, of which mythological subjects, or the ridicule of the English, constitute the *matériel*, form the whole of the outdoor amusements of the natives, excepting at the presidencies, where the educated people share in the entertainments peculiar to Europeans.

The depiction of the *bayadères*, in particular, signifies the disjunct between European perceptions of the East and their real encounters with the lands and their people. *Bayadères* was a European neologism to define female temple dancers of India. In the early nineteenth century, the Paris Opera witnessed the production of *Les Bayadères* (1810) representing what Vincent Warren has explored as the West's 'yearning for a spiritual ideal' as opposed to the 'carnal associations' of dance at the time in Western societies (2006, 99).<sup>4</sup> The question about the 'deviant sexuality' and 'waywardness' of women performers remains potent even as the seeming dichotomy of Western and Eastern female performers is seen at play here.<sup>5</sup> Dutt, in mapping the histories of English actresses on the colonial Indian stage, alludes to this hierarchical dichotomy of Eastern and Western women performers and entertainers (2009, 316). Most of these English actresses arrived in the colonies accompanying male colonial officers, and

<sup>4</sup>Warren (2006) looks at an extensive timeline of Indian influences on Western performances between 1626 and 2003 of which the imagined *bayadères*' depictions onstage are an example. These acquire further complex colonial racial implications from the mid-nineteenth century onwards with the staging of colonial exhibitions in Europe. For further details on such performances, see Rosie Jensen, *India in London* (Unpublished PhD Thesis), 2018. I am grateful to Pratchi Mahapatra for drawing my attention to this topic and guiding me towards relevant scholarship.

<sup>5</sup>See Durba Mitra (2020) and Saidiya Hartman (2019) for discussions on women's deviant sexuality and wayward lives.



clearly the presence of the theatre house in the cantonment marks the theatre's integral relationship with military life and entertainment.<sup>6</sup>

Stocqueler's own desire to become an actor was fuelled by watching the English actress Mrs Siddons play *Lady Macbeth* at London's Covent Garden. However, the desire to be a soldier overtook the passion for acting, albeit temporarily: 'The trumpet (figuratively) called me to the field [...] I had heard of battles, and I longed to follow to the field any officer competent to lead me' (Stocqueler 1873, 32). Stocqueler's brief stint in Bombay, where he arrived in 1822, indicates his continued love for the theatre that eventually provided a balm for the 'otherwise wearisome monotony' of his existence (1873, 45). Stocqueler played female roles at a small theatre in Bombay, but this, was according to him, beyond his 'histrionic capacity' (1873, 45). Emma Roberts, in her *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindostan*, also asserts that this female impersonation onstage (in Cawnpore) was a 'drawback':

Much taste and talent is usually displayed in the scenery and dresses, and with one drawback—the performance of female characters by the fiercer sex—the Cawnpore theatricals are delightful. Though sometimes an ambitious aspirant may insist upon tearing passion to rags in lofty verse, such exhibitions are comparatively rare; light farces and gay comedy are usually preferred, both by the actors and the audience, and the whim and humour frequently displayed would do credit to veteran stagers. (1835, 58)

The process of theatre-making, however, provided some relief to Stocqueler, especially in the company of some 'good actors among the officers of the 20th Foot and the governor's staff' (1873, 45). In talking about his life as a European in general in Bombay, Stocqueler reveals his vexation at being a subject of caste-based segregation in his clerky position. He writes how the 'line of demarcation studiously drawn by the petty aristocracy of the country' (1873, 44) only allowed writers, cadets, parsons, lawyers, and merchants some respectability in comparison to other Europeans who were largely regarded as 'dangerous subjects' or 'common Europeans' (1873, 44). Stocqueler found this 'peculiarly revolting' and even went on to write that he 'seemed to be regarded as a Sudra' (1873, 44).

<sup>6</sup>Emma Roberts' (1835, 52) accounts of the theatre house in Cawnpore's cantonment area are noteworthy in this context as she writes about the challenges of the acoustics of the space, especially for audiences seated in the back rows.

Stocqueler's vocation as a journalist was, therefore, partly propelled by this segregation. On the other hand, he was writing for the *Bombay Gazette* during the same time, but both the *Gazette* and the *Bombay Courier*, according to his accounts, published nothing original; they included selections from English newspapers, reports of some balls and supper, 'or a laudatory notice of an amateur performance' (1873, 49). A strong advocate of the free press, Stocqueler went back to London briefly, only to return to Bombay with all the material to start his own newspaper. In 1827, Stocqueler started his own newspaper, *Iris*, and did his best to 'invite sedition, and encourage discontent, but all to no purpose' (1873, 61). The fortunes of *Iris*, however, changed for better and Stocqueler was eventually invited to be the editor of the *Bengal Hurkaru*, 'the principal liberal paper in Calcutta' (1873, 72). The four-month journey aboard the *James Pattison* ship took longer than expected and the editorship of the *Bengal Hurkaru* went to Colonel James Young, 'a retired artillery officer of undoubted literary attainments' (1873, 89); Stocqueler took up the editorship of the *Bengal Herald*, a weekly literary journal instead.

Stocqueler's memoirs reveal a distinct pattern in his encounters with literature, theatre and as a traveller. These encounters underline the interconnectedness of his passion for acting, the need for writing and the experiences of travel that he brought to both. The unexpected and temporary setback regarding the editorship of the *Bengal Hurkaru* drew him closer to Calcutta's then existing theatre at Chowringhee, 'a clumsy old edifice' in the 'fashionable quarter of Calcutta', where he was enlisted by one Henry Meredith (a supporter of Lord William Bentick's liberal policy as Stocqueler describes him) 'into the amateur *corps dramatique*' (1873, 89). Stocqueler played numerous roles as an amateur, including Cassius, Iago, Pizarro, and Sir John Falstaff. His memoirs mention 'highly-educated people' and 'competent critics' among the regular audience (1873, 90) who were generous towards the amateur efforts. While it is generally perceived that the Chowringhee Theatre was dominated by the English at this time, Stocqueler does mention 'a troupe of wandering French Thespians, who had gone from Bordeaux to Bourbon [*and*] came on to Calcutta' (1873, 90). That he performed as part of this troupe is evident from the claim that even Molière's *Tartuffe* was included in his repertoire (1873, 90).

Stocqueler's passion for the theatre, however, needed more than just acting with trained amateurs, which he calls 'a delightful pastime' (1873, 92). He makes a note of the audience here who indulged in profane stage plays and lauded the actors, thus reflecting on the possibility of his other

vocation, the newspapers: 'They applauded my histrionic efforts; would they equally encourage an independent literary venture?' (1873, 92).<sup>7</sup> As has been previously suggested, Stocqueler's liberal attitude could not be accommodated in the pages of the more popular dailies that circulated in the colony. The *John Bull*, which was blatantly a conservative paper rallying for Toryism, was taken over by Stocqueler eventually, who revamped it as a liberal platform called the *Englishman*. Aided by the capital of Dwarkanath Tagore, one of the foremost Bengali industrialists of the time, Stocqueler was keen on following a path different from the two existing yet failed liberal journals, the *Bengal Hurkaru* and the *Indian News*; both of these 'refused to open their columns to the complaints, remonstrances, and appeals of the impoverished officers, the widows, and orphans, and others who had suffered by the failures' (1873, 93). The *Englishman*, despite some initial setbacks, was immensely successful, leading Stocqueler to start the *Bengal Sporting Magazine* (in the manner of his previous *Oriental Sporting Magazine* started in Bombay), the *United Service Journal* (where military officers were able to express their opinions on political and historical matters) and the *Oriental Observer* (a weekly literary journal) (1873, 95).

Stocqueler's numerous literary ventures naturally made him a worthy spokesperson for the demand for Calcutta's first public library. It is, thus unsurprising that when he established the Sans Souci theatre in the city, its temporary site was 'a long room beneath a bookseller's store' (1873, 115). The Sans Souci theatre replaced the previous Chowringhee theatre, which was destroyed by a terrible fire that 'swallowed it at a mouthful'; Stocqueler evocatively writes, 'The fire god has a particular appetite for theatres', echoing Byron's lines written on the tragic fire that destroyed London's Old Drury and thus, comparing the two events (1873, 115). Such misfortunes of the theatre houses impeded the continuity of theatre-making in the colonies as re-construction, raising subscriptions and finding new actors became challenging tasks. In his *Memoirs*, Stocqueler recounts in great detail these challenges, which made it urgent for him to import actresses and actors from England, including a scene-painter. Comparing the challenges faced as similar in nature for both churches and theatre, Stocqueler goes on to underline that the theatres are less fortunate: 'There is no odour of sanctity about them to hallow the voluntary

<sup>7</sup>Stocqueler's desire for an independent literary venture seemed to ensue from both the lack of wholesomeness in acting as well as his continuing editorship of the *Bengal Herald*.

contributions. It is only when some great genius appears—once in a century or so—that a flood of prosperity sets in, and gives the shareholders a dividend’ (1873, 116).

The Chowringhee and Sans Souci were not the earliest theatre-houses in Calcutta established by Europeans. A few theatre-houses preceded them, including The Playhouse (1753), The New Playhouse or Calcutta Theatre (1775), the theatre in the residence of Mrs Emma Bristow (1789), Wheler Place Theatre (1797), and Atheneum Theatre (1812). None of these, however, lasted for long due to a lack of funds or the person behind the theatre leaving it for good. Two other theatres were founded between the running and sad destruction of the Chowringhee theatre (1813–1839) and the establishment of the Sans Souci (1841): the Dum Dum Theatre (1817), mainly producing plays for the military personnel in the cantonment area, and the Boitaconnah Theatre (1824).<sup>8</sup> The presence of English actresses onstage was long associated with some of these theatre-houses, especially Mrs Bristow’s residential theatre where women even went on to play male roles, and the Dum Dum Theatre that saw European women, especially the wives of military officials participate in the productions. The establishment of theatre-houses was definitely not a phenomenon unique to the urban centre of Calcutta, but as James Mulholland (2021, 131) shows in the case of the Madras presidency too, the ‘Committee of the Theatrical Society to the Government’ was established in the late eighteenth century given the popularity of theatre—a site of racial intermixing, of ascertaining the British identity and underlining the ideas of Empire and nation. How did the women actresses, imported from England through Stocqueler’s initiatives, help the theatre-making process in the colony?

### ‘AN HONEST ACTRESS’: ENCOUNTERING AND IMPORTING ACTRESSES FOR BENGAL’S STAGE

As has been mentioned earlier, Stocqueler’s own motivation to become a theatre actor was deeply inspired by watching a renowned Welsh actress, Sarah Siddons (popularly, known as Mrs Siddons), on the London stage.

<sup>8</sup>P. Thankappan Nair mentions a few other theatres that were established after the end of Sans Souci, including Van Golder’s Lyric Theatre, the Lyceum, Lewis Theatre Royal, and Opera House. He also points out that historically there were nine major European theatre houses in Calcutta including the ones listed above (1983, 64).

Sarah Siddons was well-known for skilfully and realistically performing tragic women characters, and Stocqueler's long account of her brilliance as Lady Macbeth underlines what he deemed the best of her professional quality—'an honest actress' (1873, 20). Stocqueler's own stint impersonating female roles was brief and he admitted the challenges and inefficiency of such onstage portrayal. Sifting through the pages of his memoirs, vividly recounting his days in Calcutta, one thus finds English actresses often appearing as a necessary inclusion towards the running of theatrehouses and the steady production of plays. During Stocqueler's stays in Calcutta, therefore, he encountered some of the prominent English actresses of the time.

During his days at the Chowringhee Theatre, Stocqueler witnessed the actress, Esther Leach (also known as Mrs Leach) onstage whom he goes on to describe as 'singularly gifted' (1873, 91). Esther possessed all the attributes of 'an honest actress' as Stocqueler lauds her talent: 'Extremely pretty, very intelligent, modest, and amiable, possessing a musical voice and good taste, she adapted herself to all the requirements of the drama' (1873, 91).<sup>9</sup> As Dennis Shaw writes about the Chowringhee Theatre (nicknamed 'Calcutta's Drury'), Esther Leach was the star attraction of the theatre thus acquiring the epithet, 'The Mrs. Siddons of Bengal' (1958, 306). Shaw mentions Esther's introductory performance at the Chowringhee Theatre as Lady Teazle in *The School for Scandal*, which was attended by most of the members of the fashionable society of Calcutta (1958, 305). Stocqueler recounts her leading parts in other plays too, including '*Othello*, the *Wife*, the *Hunchback*, and the *Lady of Lyons*', comedies, and pantomimic roles in *La Muette* (1873, 91). What is striking in these examples of performances is also her minor parts in an Italian opera. Stocqueler writes that this opera was a product of a 'small buffo company' that was en route in Calcutta via Bologna, Macao, Lima, and the East Indies (1873, 91). Theatre, here, becomes a site of racial encounters not just of the European coloniser and the indigenous colonised, but also as a liminal space of crystallising the various journeys of actors and stage managers through material productions, that is, the performances. Stocqueler underlines that Esther was not much educated in the formal sense, but her gradual familiarity with Shakespeare honed her capabilities. Her popularity

<sup>9</sup>Dennis Shaw (1958) offers a rich biographical sketch of Esther Leach's life on the Calcutta stage, stressing her importance as a paid professional actress, which was not the norm at that time.

overshadowed the role of her husband, a garrison sergeant-major, who owed his career advancement to Esther, which was, however, not uncommon in those days. Stocqueler writes: ‘There were other actresses on the Calcutta boards, but they were persons of very moderate capacity’ (1873, 92).<sup>10</sup>

Stocqueler’s fond association with Mrs Leach continued progressively, as we see in his accounts of the creation of the Sans Souci Theatre, which Esther Leach ran. Shaw surmises that even her valedictory address at the Chowringhee Theatre, when she briefly departed to England only to return two years later, was written by none other than Stocqueler (1958, 307). Similarly, her opening address at the inauguration of the Sans Souci Theatre was written by one Mr John William Kaye, who was Stocqueler’s ‘friendly contemporary of the *Hurkaru*’ (1873, 116). Although the popularity and prowess of Esther Leach marked the successful opening and happy reception of the Sans Souci Theatre in 1841, Stocqueler notes the lack of the earlier crop of amateurs for the theatre as the ‘fire of their passion was burnt out’ (1873, 116). This was also coupled with the movement and departure of numerous others, necessitating the importing of actresses from England at this stage. Two actresses were, therefore, urgently brought from England to keep the business of the newly opened theatre-house running. Stocqueler refers to these actresses as a Mrs Deacle and a ‘soubrette from Cambridge’; a third Madame D., who arrived from Sydney and was an ‘Australian celebrity’, is also recounted by Stocqueler in some detail<sup>11</sup> (1873, 117).

That the importation of English actresses onto the Calcutta stage was nothing but a matter of dire necessity is evident from Stocqueler’s descriptions of Mrs Deacle and a faded pantomimist named Barry. Stocqueler accords some praise to Mrs Deacle, saying that she played a ‘gorgeous Cleopatra’ at the Adelphi theatre and ‘was a fine woman of some capacity’ but also notes her alcoholism—‘her devotion to Bacchus’—that rendered her short of being ‘valuable’ (1873, 117). Apart from the oblique mention of the soubrette from Cambridge, Stocqueler hints at the pantomimist Barry arriving with his wife from Cambridge, which might allude to the

<sup>10</sup> Shaw also mentions the presence of other English actresses during the time, whose roles as supporting ladies were much subordinate to Esther’s stature and calibre (1958, 305–306).

<sup>11</sup> Shaw also notes the importation of one Miss Cowley, ‘who was useful in roles which required dancing, and who was sometimes sent to do a hornpipe between the acts’ (1958, 308).

latter's involvement with the stage. The story of Madame D., a debutant English actress who arrived from Australia, is perhaps the most crucial in understanding the position of such actresses, whether imported or arriving on their own in search of employment at the theatre.

Stocqueler introduces the incidents surrounding the debut of Madame D as painful and disturbing for him. The English actress 'who had married a Frenchman, a master of a trading vessel, came up from Sydney in the expectation of obtaining an engagement' (1835, 117). However, Captain D (the husband of Madame D.) was charged with piracy by the attorney of an Australian ship-owner who alleged he had stolen the ship. The accused committed suicide, leaving Madame D. to seek solace in the protection of an officer of the Bengal army (a friend of Stocqueler). The officer expressed his keen wish to Stocqueler about employing Madame D. in the theatre house so that 'she might assert her independence and earn an honest livelihood' (1835, 117). Stocqueler recounts how Madame D. made her debut on the Calcutta stage as Madame Moenette in a farce called, *Mischief-making*. He writes that the 'theatre had gained an actress', while the officer had successfully got rid of his burden. Eventually, however, the officer committed suicide at his residence on the night of Madame D.'s debut after the performance. Stocqueler's summaries of his letters (suicide note) reveal that the officer was anxiously anticipating the arrival of his wife and children from England and did not want them to find out about the 'immoral' alliance with the actress. The jury attributed the death to the officer's 'temporary derangement', while 'Madame D. did not survive the catastrophe' (1835, 117).

Such unfortunate and violent incidents were not uncommon in the life of the English theatre in India,<sup>12</sup> but the regularity of theatre-making remained uninterrupted by such temporary upheavals. Stocqueler, thus underlines the unimpassioned business as usual at the theatre house although 'neither the imported actresses nor the new set of amateurs cast much lustre upon the stage' (1835, 119). Both the vocations of theatre-making and journalism suffered a severe blow for Stocqueler due to the First Anglo-Afghan War, and he had to leave India for good. Summing up the disastrous effects on theatre, Stocqueler writes, 'It is in such times that

<sup>12</sup> Shaw writes about the tragic incident of Esther Leach being burnt by a fire at the Sans Souci theatre one evening as she was performing in *The Handsome Husband*. She eventually succumbed to her injuries (1958, 309).

theatres suffer; luxuries can be better spared than the necessities of life'<sup>13</sup> (1835, 119). The life of the theatre, which included migrations of company officials, the establishment of theatre houses, and importations of actresses, however, points towards the multifarious vocations that directly or indirectly contributed to theatre-making; as much as the ship journeys themselves, the theatre in early colonial India can then be seen as a liminal space or an archipelagic existence bringing place-making and theatre-making together through the cultural labours encompassing race, gender, and colonial mobility. In the following final section, I bring together the travels, vocations, and perceptions of Joachim Stocqueler to show how theatre-making through migration necessitates transgressing static place-centric frameworks of historical analysis.

### FAMILIARISING THE 'UNTRODDEN TRACTS': TRAVELS, VOCATIONS, AND PERCEPTIONS IN THEATRE-MAKING

One of Stocqueler's first writing ventures focussing on his travels in Persia was rather descriptively put in the title of his work as his fifteen-month pilgrimage through 'untrodden tracts' in Persia (1832). By 1844, when he had relocated back in London from India, his literary trajectory witnesses a prolific phase with publications about military life in the colony, handbooks for new military officials travelling to the colonies, as well as the dioramas discussed earlier. Equally importantly, this was also a phase in his life when he started writing plays such as *Polkomania* and *The Three Fra Diavolos*, both published in 1844. Looking closely at the texts of these plays, it is apparent how place-making (or the perceptions of places) is integral to the process of theatre-making. Here, place-making in theatre emerges both through the scenography indicated in the performance text as well as through the dialogues between characters. In *The Three Fra Diavolos* (a dramatic sketch in one act), which Stocqueler created for production at London's Lyceum Theatre,<sup>14</sup> the scenography and properties are reminiscent of the fleeting, yet enrapturing, visual and auditory images reflected in the dioramas:

<sup>13</sup>Sushil Kumar Mukherjee in his introductory work, *The Story of the Calcutta Theatres, 1753–1980*, writes about a similar fate of Calcutta's first European theatre house, The Playhouse, which 'went out of existence during Nawab Siraj Ud Daula's attack of Calcutta in 1756' (1982, 2).

<sup>14</sup>The text referred to in this chapter is indicated as 'the copy of the original bill as first produced on 20th May 1844 at London's Lyceum Theatre' (1844, 1).



Scene 3.--(Set)- Ruins of Adrian's Villa—A Bower, L. Rocks over c. trap and passage up from under the stage.

Properties.—Guns to fire, whistle for Fra Diavolo. (Stocqueler 1844, np)

These seemingly static indications of place in scenography are contrasted by the actual images of place-making in the exchanges between characters. These appear frequently in the text through a mix of visual, auditory, and tactile vignettes, such as 'rocks shrouded with black pine; valleys alive with wanton birds' (1844, 7), or 'a brawling waterfall, an old grotto, and a few rickety houses!' (1844, 8), or through more direct allusions to untrodden tracts such as 'an old crumbling lump of stone, rising out of a mephitic waste, uncheered by habitation, hedge or tree' (1844, 11). The vividness of imaginative place-making informed by travel, conquest, and theatre-making itself in the colonies is perhaps best captured in this brief exchange between the two female characters, Lady Emily and Lady Toppleton, in the play:

Lady E. This, my dear Mrs. Toppleton, is the spot I mentioned to you: picture to yourself, the Emperor Adrian receiving from that elevated summer house, the crowds of captive maidens, who filled the area; conceive that vast space filled with translucent waters, and presenting an array of tiny fleets, engaged in mimic war.'

Mrs. T. Ah, my dear, my fancy lacks the vividness of yours; I can see nothing but dirty old walls, and decayed vegetation [...]

Lady E. (Musing.) Cypress and ivy; weed and wallflower grown, matted and massed together; hillocks heaped on what were chambers, arch crushed columns strewn [...]. (1844, 14)

Epithets such as 'an array of tiny fleets, engaged in mimic war' or 'that vast space filled with translucent waters' convey the dioramic perceptions from the ships as found in Stocqueler's descriptions from the 'Overland Mail'. The guides for travellers to India and the dioramas appear a little later in Stocqueler's publishing career (appearing gradually from the 1850s) but have their genesis in the performance texts. This brings us to the crucial methodological necessity of looking at and interpreting historical documents concerning travel, migration, relocation, and material production of performance, especially those attributed to colonial theatre migrants/travellers. I am also referring here to what Viv Gardener delineates as various ways of seeing and interpreting—'looking in all directions'—that are crucial to the writing of theatre histories. Stocqueler, therefore, 'offers a

prism through which to explore the social and theatrical scenarios and imaginaries of the period' (2016, 80). Poonam Trivedi's observation in this regard that English garrison theatre remains one of the most neglected, least acknowledged and least theorised micro-areas of English theatre in the colonies (2016, 106–107), makes it all the more vital to look at personages such as Joachim Stocqueler. While Trivedi (2016, 109–113) offers a close reading of Stocqueler's *Memoirs* in terms of theatre-making in colonial Bombay and Calcutta, the methodological limitation of treating it as a stand-alone text remains. The *Memoirs* appeared in 1873, a period in Stocqueler's life when he had briefly returned to London from the United States (where he had migrated to in 1859) only to move back again in 1875.<sup>15</sup> Prior to these travels and even afterwards, Stocqueler's prolific career as a writer necessitates looking at his other writings beyond the ones directly related to theatre.

What does looking in all directions, therefore, imply methodologically for histories of theatre migrants? To go back to the ship journeys, with which this chapter began, the site of the moving (and anchored) vessel itself is the space from which it is perhaps possible to look in all directions. The space of the ship and that of the theatre are, in this sense, connected as 'travel and contact are crucial sites' (Ghosh 2011, 497). Ghosh further writes in connection to Euroimperial travel in the Indian Ocean, 'that relationships of power do not disappear, but rather subject peoples are able to subvert them in ways that blur those categories, making them contingent and relational' (2011, 497). A perusal of an account of another ship journey from Bombay to Calcutta (1824) by Jackson James reveals this persistence and subversion of relationships of power, where the coloniser's unfamiliarity with indigenous (largely religious) customs arouses the vexation of the colonised (indigenous crew/travellers onboard the vessel).<sup>16</sup> In contrast to this account, I see Stocqueler's multifarious accounts as a traveller, journalist, and theatre-maker as closely interrelated

<sup>15</sup> While it is beyond the remit of this chapter to focus on Stocqueler's immigrant life in the United States, it merits mentioning that he fled during a court hearing (1859) possibly following financial bankruptcy and debts. He took up the name J.H. Siddons (drawing a curious genealogy with Mrs Siddons) and gained a new reputation as a Shakespeare scholar.

<sup>16</sup> In a mode completely different from Stocqueler, then, Jackson James' slim account of his travel amounts to a vehement complaint against the 'natives' to the East India Company Officials, deterring aspirant passengers from travelling on the vessel. The account incidentally appeared in the columns of the *Bengal Hurkaru*.

in exploring the colony and the empire's relational, contingent, and subversive power dynamics. The ship, therefore, becomes a crucial liminal site bearing historical traces of voyagers and migrants (Khatun 2018). Similarly, the multiplicity of texts, customs, beliefs, and cultural practices that mark the encounters of the Empire and the colonies is vital to the writing of theatre histories, just as Prange (2018) delineates the importance of palace, sea, port, and mosques in bringing the distant and local together in the making of a fluid religion, which he calls 'monsoon Islam'.

In conclusion, this chapter has somewhat provoked the possibility of a rethinking of how to write histories of theatre migrants, and eventually of colonial theatre itself. It resonates with one of the aims of the volume, that is, exploring how the lives and vocations of European colonial theatre migrants brought about institutional and aesthetic transformations in the theatre businesses of the times. One of the major outcomes of Joachim Stocqueler's life as a theatre migrant is that of his contributions and reflections as a journalist. The many newspapers that he started in Bombay and Calcutta—sites of print that have been historically sites of complex encounters between the Empire and the colony—become as crucial to understanding theatre-making as the vocation of reporting itself. Unsurprisingly, therefore, newspapers such as the *Englishman*, *Bengal Hurkaru*, and the *Oriental Observer* remain some of the primary sources in recounting how theatre-making was developing in the colony vis-à-vis the eyes of the audiences too. To relay the metaphorical title of this chapter more materially, then, is to acknowledge the fact that both place-making and theatre-making through the eyes of the theatre migrant is to familiarise oneself with 'untrodden tracts'. Significantly, the importation of European theatre to the colony also compelled a different familiarisation with 'untrodden tracts' for the indigenous (audiences) inhabitants themselves. Theatre-making, here, is akin to what Lady Emily guides Lady Topperton (in *The Three Fra Diavolos*) to do—'picture to yourself'. What the sources, referred to and read at length, in this chapter then equip us with methodologically is a way towards picturing to ourselves. It is a picturing of how European theatre migrants brought their travels, vocations, and perceptions to print and theatre. As a theatre migrant, Joachim Stocqueler's oeuvre merits a closer, nuanced, and holistic reading. These writings beckon an interpretative looking in all directions to underscore what early European theatre-making in India signified, and how it transformed even while remaining largely liminal.

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# Walter Bentley, Scottish Tragedian: Australasia's Equivocal Theatre Migrant

*Sue-Anne Wallace*

## INTRODUCTION

When my grandfather, Scottish tragedian Walter Bentley, migrated to Australia in 1909, it was the third time he had settled in Australasia. In this chapter, I explore the impetus for Bentley's migrations. Although he fled his Presbyterian home, Bentley was a proud Scot, proud of his country's creative history, and the authority of the British Empire. He was raised steeped in biblical stories, as his maternal and paternal grandfathers, and his father, were ministers of the Scottish church. Bentley's enthusiasm for his Scottishness is evident in the clippings he kept in his scrapbooks, such as letters, reviews, news, and invitations; this was a cultural heritage he never abandoned. I ask why he emigrated three times, and I argue his successes on the stage, and in Australian society, depended on the support of the Scottish diaspora. I show that he assimilated into Australian culture. Indeed, rather than the Scottish diaspora, or Scottish performers, his

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enduring impact was upon aspiring Australian actors and actresses, who were pupils of his college in Sydney.

While Bentley was enthusiastically welcomed when touring in Scotland, as much because of his father's reputation as his theatrical abilities, his Australian welcomes rose to new heights. In considering Bentley's life as a Scottish theatre-migrant, I suggest the support of the Scottish diaspora was pivotal—at times towns competed to organise the most impressive welcomes. It was a symbiotic relationship—for Bentley, it was extraordinary publicity, and for local Scots, it was a timely opportunity to celebrate one of their own countrymen, a 'star' touring Australia, cementing their credibility in their new lands. Quite quickly, when he settled first in Dunedin, New Zealand, then Brisbane, and, finally, Sydney, Bentley's ventures into Australasian society grew expansive, constructing his settler-identity—a diasporic hybridity as a Scottish-Australian.

Eric Richards describes Australia from the late-eighteenth century as 'the last habitable continent to be grasped by European imperialism'. Indeed, Richards's thesis is that 'the colonial population was socially engineered from the start' (2011, 165). Emigrants to Australia, almost exclusively from Britain after the passage of the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* that formed the basis of the White Australia Policy, brought their culture along with their possessions. This policy, according to Rose Butler, 'reflected the new nation's search for a national identity in European culture and British-based racial hegemony' (2022, 348). Among the British migrants, Scottish settler identities played to their customs and traditions—to tartans, kilts and pipes, festivals and celebrations, Presbyterianism and Scottish associations—as much as their characteristics of clannishness, thriftiness, temperance, respectability, independence, and a strong work ethic (McCarthy 2011, 152–159). Applying a cultural lens on Australian theatre history, Julian Meyrick suggests, is not easy as 'it is not straightforward ... because the history of Australia is not straightforward. The ready correlations some nations might make between their social development and their cultural development do not hold for the jangled roil of aggression, theft, invention, cruelty, curiosity, fellowship, discrimination, and hope that characterises colonisation of Australia' (2022, 5). Nevertheless, I focus a cultural lens on Walter Bentley's Scottishness and how he encouraged the Scottish diaspora and Scottish associations to validate his 'star' status in Australia, suggesting that they, as emigrants, welcomed the opportunity to celebrate a Scot, and Scotland.

## SCOTTISH MIGRATION

In their recent volume on Australia, Migration and Empire, Philip Payton and Andrekos Varnava note that ‘migrants played a major role in the creation and settlement of the British Empire and the wider “Anglosphere”’ (2019, 1). Migrants arrived to Australia freighted not only with their own hopes and dreams but also bearing the ambitions of the wider colonial project, which sought to establish Australia as an improbable outpost of Whiteness. Indeed, as Eric Richards notes:

The Australian immigration story was improbable from the start. Australia was an immense distance from any other British settlement and extremely difficult to reach. Its peopling from the British Isles was achieved by its access to layers of the British and Irish populations made suggestible in the 1830s and beyond—critical years at both ends of the migration system. In the process, the Australian colonies slew off the negative image of the original convict colonisation and generated new lines of immigration. (2019, 28)

Bentley was not alone in seeking Australasia’s new shores, but unlike many Scottish emigrants, twice he returned to Britain. Emigration of Scots in the mid-nineteenth century was not uncommon. Advertisements encouraged young men and women to migrate to seek better lives. The Australasian colonies sought their share of these potential citizens, who created a microcosm of the British Empire in these distant lands. Religious and cultural traditions translated into their new homes. Migrant networks and personal introductions were important to establishing a place in the new society. The Scottish diaspora in Australasia celebrated their culture, the birthday of Robert Burns and Hogmanay, creating clubs and associations for their countrymen. Indeed, Brad Patterson et al. claim that Burns’s birthday ‘served as the most common and most effective site of memory for Scots in New Zealand’ (2013, 179). The Scots so succeeded in exporting their cultural heritage that it is suggested they ‘subverted the Englishness of the Empire [and] ... dominated the social, economic, and political life of some regions in which they settled, often permeating into the elite class’ (Wilkie 2017, 6, 10). To support his argument, Wilkie turns to Andrew Thompson, who agrees that the Scots ‘were the first peoples of the British Isles to take on an Imperial mentality, and possibly the longest to sustain it’ (quoted in Wilkie 2017, 6). As I show in my discussion below, Bentley certainly fits this description. In his analysis of Scottish



migration to Australia, Wilkie draws on ‘contemporary theoretical frameworks and concepts (such as diasporas, transnationalism, and identities) ... [beginning] the process of moving beyond the earlier “contribution histories”’ (2017, 4). A little of Bentley’s ‘contribution history’ is necessary to understand why he migrated to the Antipodes three times, although I acknowledge the potential unreliability of Bentley’s reflections on his own life, reconstructing his life in interviews and in his writings, what Wessely calls ‘performative acts’ (2023, 140). In drawing on Wilkie’s theoretical framework, particularly diaspora, I turn to Lindsay Proudfoot and Dianne Hall, who define *diaspora*, proposing:

its current critical rendition as transnational consciousness centres on the importance of locality as the *locus* of memory and identity within emigrant-descended communities. ... ideas of place as an important referent in the construction of Irish and Scottish settler identities ... so hybridised, that they are always place-less, always occupying in-between space, neither here nor there. (Proudfoot and Hall 2011, 47, 48)

This diasporic hybridity—‘a desire for both separation and connection’ (Proudfoot and Hall 2011, 51)—provides a useful framework in which to consider Bentley’s constructed settler-identity in Australia. On the other hand, Angela McCarthy’s review of Scottish historiography questions whether ‘being Scottish has gone hand in hand with a powerful sense of being British’, suggesting Scottish migrants tended to be more interested in ‘an individual’s precise place of origin’ (2011, 29, 46), whether Highlander, or Lowlander. While proudly Scottish, Bentley never lost his Britishness, nor his attraction to the British Empire.

### FLEEING SCOTLAND

The first time Bentley landed in Australia, in 1866, it was in all likelihood the result of an impetuous decision to ‘run away from the boat’ on which he was serving as an apprentice (Bentley 1915, 48). Shipboard life clearly did not suit the educated and opinionated young teenager—he was seventeen years old and had been raised in a feisty, scholarly environment. Bentley had left Scotland to escape a clerical career, which was to be imposed upon him by his father, the Reverend Dr James Begg (Fig. 1).

The Reverend Begg was one of 470 ministers who, during the Disruption of the Established Church of Scotland in 1843, formed the

**Fig. 1** Reverend James Begg, after 1843. Photograph by David Hill and Robert Adamson, National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh



Free Church of Scotland. He was an energetic, opinionated stalwart of the Free Church, taking a leading role in advocacy and politics within the church and with government. He was elected moderator in 1865. In common with other ministers of the Free Church, the Reverend Begg demanded strict compliance with his rules and those of the church, one of which was a complete abhorrence of the stage as an immoral den of iniquity and the gate to Hell. Bentley's future life on the stage was to challenge every value of his father's faith.

Walter Bentley was born William Begg in Edinburgh in 1849. To avoid confusion, I shall continue to use his stage rather than his birth name, although he did not adopt his stage name until 1873. He was the second child of his father's second marriage. His childhood was focussed on his education, probably at first in the religious school attached to his father's church in South Clerk Road, Edinburgh. It was when he entered college

that, as he later wrote, he saw things differently and ‘ran away to sea’ (Bentley 1915, 48).

Being in Edinburgh as the oldest son in the family home might have caused Bentley to reflect on joining his brothers who had emigrated to Dunedin, New Zealand. He wrote he ‘jibbed at the thought of entering the ministry’ (1915, 48) and so he escaped. Lacking letters of introduction, he would need to work his passage to Australasia. He joined the merchant fleet of the White Star Line as an apprentice. When the *Colonial Empire* docked in Sydney on 27 November 1866, he jumped ship. Recounting his life story Bentley claimed a warrant was issued for his arrest, although he suggested that it was later destroyed in a fire (1915, 48). Nevertheless, as a wanted young man in Sydney, he needed the assistance of two emigrants who were well positioned to provide for his escape: Alexander Stuart, who hailed from Edinburgh, and was eventually to be Premier of New South Wales, and Robert Towns, an Englishman with extensive land holdings. Bentley was spirited out of Sydney, first to Braidwood, 275 kilometres south of Sydney, a risky place to seek shelter as it was the territory of renowned bushrangers, so there were police searches in the region. Towns took control of the situation and sent Bentley to his expansive station, ‘Callinal’, almost 100 kilometres inland from the northern Queensland town of Rockhampton. Bentley was to remain there as a station-hand for three years, learning the ropes of mustering stock, working with Aboriginal stockmen, and living a rough, arduous life. Droving a herd of cattle to market in Brisbane with five or six Aboriginal stockmen in 1869 or 1870, Bentley took the opportunity to leave Australia for Dunedin, probably sailing on one of Towns’s ships, as Towns had businesses in the town.

Why Dunedin? The city had become known as a haven for Scots, particularly members of the Free Church of Scotland, following the Disruption. Ministers and their congregations were encouraged to emigrate to Dunedin in the south of the South Island of New Zealand, founded and surveyed in 1846 as a Scottish and Presbyterian settlement (McDonald 1965, 11). From 1848, the exodus of Scottish Presbyterians began.

In Bentley’s family, three of his brothers had emigrated to Dunedin, one of whom, Alexander, settled there permanently. Two of the Begg brothers from the first family, Alexander and James, with letters of introduction from their father, emigrated to Dunedin in 1859. Alexander Begg was in every aspect his father’s son, a stalwart of the Free Church, appointed as an Elder of Dunedin’s First Church, and active in civic affairs. He was

dogmatic in his beliefs, and pedantic in his opinions, 'having a peculiar faculty for rubbing people up the wrong way' (Thomson 1998, 36). With his father's blessing, Bentley's older brother, Ferdinand Faithfull Begg, the first-born of the second family, left Edinburgh in 1862, when he was fifteen years old. He sailed without family on the three-month, treacherous voyage to New Zealand and was soon settled, working in a Dunedin bank.

Possibly, the idea of finally joining his brothers was in Bentley's mind when he left Rockhampton. At the time when Bentley arrived in Dunedin, fifty per cent of the population in the Otago/Southland region was Scottish (Patterson et al. 2013, 60); their religious convictions were of prime importance to their daily lives. In this environment, Bentley might have seemed an outcast, having abandoned his family, especially the influence of his father, and apparently having discarded his religious upbringing. However, surprisingly, he had a continuing attraction to the Presbyterian Church, engaging with the congregation of Dunedin's progressive Knox Church and developing a lasting friendship with the Scottish minister, Reverend D. M. Stuart.<sup>1</sup>

By 1870, two of Bentley's brothers, Alexander and Ferdinand Begg (James Begg had returned to Scotland) were well settled in Dunedin. Ferdinand had a business career and was soon enrolled in the new University of Otago, becoming one of its first cohort of graduates in 1871. However, not all graduates, including Ferdinand, stayed to contribute to the growth of the country (Clarke 2018, 39). One of Ferdinand's activities in Dunedin was with an amateur theatre group, an activity frowned upon by the strict Presbyterian family of his fiancée. He was ordered to give up either the theatre or his intention to marry young Jessie Cargill, whose grandfather had been a co-founder of the Free Church's settlement in Dunedin. In 1873, Ferdinand Begg left the stage, left Dunedin, and returned to Scotland, where he and Jessie were married.

Bentley had a position with Dunedin Town Council, collecting overdue rates. His deep commitment in his leisure time was to sporting activities, such as cricket and boxing, which would have assisted him to forge links with Dunedin's citizens and institutions. According to Brad Patterson et al. organised sport 'exerted a far greater hold in New Zealand' than it

<sup>1</sup>The first letter is in 1874 but the exact date is no longer legible though possibly 6 August, subsequent letters are dated 10 January 1892 and 10 October 1892 from the Reverend Stuart to Walter Bentley attest to this friendship, The Bentley Papers, Box IX Green Scrapbook, 112, 113, 115.

did in Scotland (2013, 19). The theatre had not entered his life. That all changed when he took his brother Ferdinand's position in an amateur production of *Still Waters Run Deep*, on 1 August 1873. As he wrote he 'hadn't been on a stage before, nor had I at any time the least thought of becoming an actor. Moreover, I had seen very few plays, because of the rigidity with which as a child I was brought up and later through not coming over-much in touch with professional companies' (1915, 49). He was so inspired by being on stage, he left Dunedin immediately for Auckland, joining a professional company at the Prince of Wales Theatre. William Begg was now known as Walter Bentley; he had left the Begg family behind.

One of the actors in the company was Lachlan McGowan, a Scottish-born actor, with whom Bentley had a life-long friendship. I return to McGowan's career later in this chapter as I document Scottish players in Australia who engaged with Bentley onstage.

The impetus for Bentley's emigration to Australia and New Zealand was to escape a future life in the church that had been planned by his father. All things considered, he did remarkably well, securing a role as a stockman on a remote Queensland property for three years, and then a more traditional position as a clerk with Dunedin Town Council, settling there for a further three years. Bentley's unexpected plunge into the theatrical world so enthused him that within six months he returned to Britain in 1874 to forge his new career. With an introduction by his aunt, Emily Faithfull, an entrepreneurial philanthropist and publisher, who was well known in literary and theatrical circles in London, he became juvenile lead for Henry Irving. Apart from an article describing his romantic career (Bentley 1915), Bentley left no autobiography. The sources for this chapter are drawn from the extensive newspaper archives charting his career<sup>2</sup> and *The Bentley Papers*, five scrapbooks housed in Sydney's Mitchell Library, Library of New South Wales.

### A 'STAR' IN AUSTRALASIA

The second time Bentley left Britain, he left Florence Grant, his Naples-born-Spanish-Sicilian wife of four years, to accept an invitation from one of Australia's theatrical entrepreneurs. In 1891, he sailed for Melbourne

<sup>2</sup> UK: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>; United States: <https://newspaperarchive.com/browse/us/>; New Zealand <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers>; and Australia <https://trove.nla.gov.au/>.

with Danish actress Laura Hansen. It was George Coppin who drew Bentley to Melbourne, opening with *Rob Roy*, the Scottish favourite. The Theatre Royal was full of Bentley's Scottish countrymen. His acting-manager, T. Amory Sullivan, the son of the tragedian Barry Sullivan, conveyed a message that one of Bentley's Scottish servants was needed front of house to act as interpreter 'as the ushers and ticket-takers were approaching a state bordering on imbecility on account of the unintelligible babel that was going on' ('A Scotch Babel' 1892, 6).

When he stepped on the Australian stage in 1891 (Fig. 2), Bentley began to create his settler-identity, building on the successes he had enjoyed in Scotland, where his fame drew on his family connections—his father and his aunt Emily Faithfull—his relationships with Henry Irving and Adelaide Ristori, with whom he had toured in Britain in 1882. All were important to his credibility. Further, he emphasised his cultural

**Fig. 2** Walter Bentley, 1891. Photo by Vandyck Studio, Melbourne. Private Collection





Fig. 3 ‘Walter Bentley’, Quiz and the Lantern, *Adelaide*, 3 March 1893, 8. Loose page in The Bentley Papers, Box 1x, Green Scrapbook, 2

heritage, playing to the abiding passion of Scots for the national poet, Robert Burns, with whom both he and his father falsely claimed a relationship, courting the Scottish diaspora (Fig. 3). Through these luminaries of British society Bentley established his reputation in Australia.

Throughout four arduous years of touring around the Australasian colonies, Bentley cultivated the Scottish diaspora, who enthusiastically welcomed him to their cities. During his tour in 1893 through regional New South Wales and Victoria, despite the catastrophic financial depression and bank closures which were happening (Clark 1981, reprinted 1997, 90–128), Bentley became aware of debate about federation of the Australian colonies, which added to his interest in Australian politics. Bentley had frequently befriended politicians, particularly those who were Scottish-born. Such friendships ensured Bentley could engage their patronage for his performances and attract privileged access to political and illustrious circles.

In 1895, Bentley stopped touring, settling in Brisbane, Queensland, the state in which he had lived when he was a stockman. Why Brisbane? In the 1890s, Brisbane was a significant urban society, although,

interestingly, Queensland had the 'lowest proportion of Australian-born of any colony' (Lawson 1973, xxii). The majority of Brisbane's foreign-born residents were from Britain, heavily weighted towards Scotland—and Presbyterianism (Lawson 1973, 20, 23). Touring companies travelled vast distances from southern capitals to Brisbane, performing at the city's new theatres built in the 1880s—the Opera House, Theatre Royal, and the Gaiety Theatre. Perhaps it was memories of the greetings he received in the city that encouraged him to choose Brisbane as his home. His prestigious welcomes were legendary: in 1893, 400 or so people had crowded Brisbane Railway Station to welcome the arrival of his train. A carriage waited outside to take him to his hotel, drawn, not by horses, but by members of the Scottish diaspora. Newspapers had a field day, writing of the 'asses' who worshipped Bentley. One critic called him the 'prince of advertisers' (*The Bentley Papers*, Box 1X, Green Scrapbook, 65). His Brisbane residency, however, did not commence positively, as soon Bentley was declared insolvent. The court was advised that William Begg, known as Walter Bentley, 'had creditors in London, in Glasgow, Cape Colony, Belfast, Sydney, Melbourne, and elsewhere ...'. Nevertheless, His Honour Justice Real 'sought information to show that the insolvency was brought about by misfortune' and adjourned the case ('An Actor's Insolvency' 1896, 2). Seemingly oblivious to the press reports, with his usual enterprising confidence, Bentley continued with charitable events, raising funds for Lady Musgrave Lodge in Spring Hill, meeting with a group of ladies who were desirous of forming a dramatic club, entertaining the parliamentary cricket team in Ipswich following their game, and teaching elocution and dramatic arts at Brisbane's School of Arts.

Bentley had always drawn on his 'relationship' with Robert Burns, and shortly after settling into Brisbane he burst into a lyrical tribute to commemorate the anniversary of Burns's death on 21 July 1796 ('A Spray on the Tomb of Burns'<sup>3</sup> 1896, 6). It is easy to read into this poem that Bentley too was 'home'—but in Brisbane, not Scotland. Yet, rather than seek further engagement with his Scottish countrymen, Bentley developed business, political, and civic interests. He raised a campaign to save the Brisbane City Organ. He stood unsuccessfully for election three times, using his theatrical skills in public meetings which, nevertheless, failed to stimulate enough interest to elect him. As one paper reported, 'we don't know Hall

<sup>3</sup> See [A Spray on the Tomb of Burns by Walter Bentley | AustLit: Discover Australian Stories](#).



[his opponent] from a crowd, but we know Bentley, therefore we unhesitatingly say vote for Hall' (*Lyttleton Times* 1898, 2).<sup>4</sup>

Then it was reported he had 'bade a final adieu to the stage ... was teaching elocution, [holding] several government appointments in schools of Arts in various parts of Queensland ... [and held] a pass to permit travel all over the numerous railway lines! He [coached] members of several dramatic clubs and is altogether doing very well earning about £15 per week' (*Free Lance* 1896, 4). Bentley was also keeping up appearances, having been seen in Toowoomba, seated in the carriage of the new Governor, Lord Lamington. He 'comported himself in the manner of a King entering his dominions. It is whispered that Walter will be knighted in the near future!' ('Prose about Pro's' 1896, 4). The knighthood did not happen.

Suddenly, what had at first appeared to be a stable commitment as a theatre-migrant settled in Brisbane was abandoned. Bentley headed to Sydney. He was certainly cutting his ties with Brisbane, for as he departed, he put the entirety of his property—including pianos, organ, costumes, sets, office, and household furniture—for auction, with no reserve prices (*Brisbane Courier* 1899, 8). This was an inglorious departure from a state that had generously welcomed him five years previously and where he had seemed so settled, both theatrically and socially.

Bentley was back in Sydney, where *Dreyfus or Vive la France*, the 'original, historical, emotional, and sensational' play he co-wrote with George Rignold, opened at the Criterion to good houses. Next he toured his *Passion Play*, to Newcastle, north of Sydney, to Melbourne and regional Victoria over Christmas, returning to Sydney's Town Hall on New Year's Eve for the Grand Annual Scots Concert. He taught elocution for a few weeks in Sydney, and then he toured, in partnership with Douglas Ancelon, to Tasmania and New Zealand. It seems he was somewhat lost as to his next move, but then in October 1900, his departure from Australasia became absolute as he left for the west coast of America, touring with his leading lady, Ada Woodhill. In New York, the company disbanded, and Bentley returned—alone—to Britain in 1901, resuming his provincial touring life, quite separately from his wife, who, since his departure in 1891, had toured on her own account, as the Mrs Walter Bentley's Company.

<sup>4</sup>In the 1890s, Bentley was to stand for election three times in Queensland, once as a labour candidate, a prelude to the Australian Labour Party which was formed in 1901. In Sydney in 1916, he was to stand twice, first as an independent and next as a liberal candidate.

### LONGING FOR AUSTRALIA

The third time Bentley emigrated from Britain, although still claimed as Scotland's finest actor, British newspaper interest in him had drained away, suggesting he was struggling to find leading roles. Indeed, in 1908, he was playing a supporting role in *The Nihilist*. He said he was escaping Britain's severe winters for the Australian climate. He said he had a 'longing for Australia' ('Theatrical Tit-bits' 1909, 3). By the time this article was published, Bentley was indeed coming, he was already on the boat, the White Star line's *Suevic*, stopping in Albany, Western Australia, on 16 April 1909. Bentley suggested, if there were inducements, he could appear there in some of his favourite characters ('Personal' 1909, 7), but he never performed in Western Australia. This final trip heralded Bentley's successful and enduring migration to Australia. And it was for the last time, Bentley left the country of his birth, arriving in Melbourne in early May 1909. Australia henceforth was to be his home. One of the challenges for Bentley, the theatre-migrant, was his age. He was sixty years old.

Bentley chose to settle in Sydney in 1910, and he remained there until his death in 1927. Why choose Sydney? It is unclear as to why he did not choose Brisbane—except there may have been some mixed memories of his previous life in the city—or Melbourne, which was the centre of the major theatrical companies with whom he had performed. Sydney was the capital of New South Wales, in a country which had federated on 1 January 1901. It was the town where Bentley first stepped ashore in Australia, illegally, in 1866. He surely did not have pleasant memories of that occasion. However, it was where, in 1893, he had been grandly farewelled as he left the city on a country tour through New South Wales and Victoria. Perhaps it was memories of the adulation of the city, particularly the Scottish diaspora, that encouraged him to choose Sydney as his final home, a new territory for a new beginning. In the 1910s, Sydney's population was more than a million. Although tastes were rapidly changing, and interest was growing for dramas that reflected contemporary Australia, yet the theatrical behemoth J. C. Williamson dominated theatres with imported stars playing dramas, comedies, and operas (Meyrick 2022, 23) and Bentley continued with his repertoire of Shakespeare and melodramas.

On returning to Australia, this time Bentley had no invitation from theatre entrepreneurs; he was striking out on his own. He re-presented himself to the public, proclaiming his status as an actor with a thirty-year career, his links to theatrical royalty and Henry Irving, and his reputation

in Britain and America. Without a theatre manager to settle him into his new surroundings, his success was going to depend on his entrepreneurial skills and his capacity to exploit his theatrical experiences, drawing on his charismatic personality and theatrical powers, and garnering once more the support of the Scottish diaspora. Immediately, he threw himself into the theatrical, social, and political worlds of the city, becoming an ever-present figure around town. While he continued to cultivate the Scottish diaspora, he branched further into Sydney's elite society, creating friendships among academics, politicians, and high society, but few deep friendships with Scots on the Australian stage.

### SCOTTISH THEATRE-MIGRANTS

To put Bentley's life in the context of the Scottish diaspora and Scottish theatre-migrants, I turn to considering other Scottish actors and actresses on the Australian stage. While Scots had flocked to the southern lands of Australia and New Zealand, and naturally there were Scottish players among them, it appears they were in the minority, and are now shrouded in obscurity, just as the lives of so many well-known actors on the Australian stage in the nineteenth century have been lost. In searching for Scottish actors in Australia, it is relevant to consider who was included in contemporary histories. An article written in 1913 cited the major players on the Australian stage were Walter Bentley, along with Oscar Asche, Hugh Ward, H. B. Irving, George Titheradge, Bland Holt, Julius Knight, Alfred Dampier, George Rignold, Dion Boucicault, and Robert Brough ('Australian Stage History' 1913, 24–25). Of this hierarchy of actors, only Bentley and Knight were Scottish-born, and only Bentley was resident in Australia. Of the other actors who personified Australian theatre history in 1913, Bentley's long-standing relationships were with English-born actors George Rignold and George Titheradge. Only two Scottish performers shared the stage with Bentley, Lachlan McGowan and Henrietta Watson. Their trajectories to Australasia were quite different to Bentley's.

Bentley first met Scottish-Australian Lachlan McGowan (c. 1831–1899) when they were sailing out of Dunedin in 1873 to Auckland, where Bentley joined McGowan's company, possibly, as he claimed, being an 'angel' investor in the professional company (Bentley 1915, 49). The arrival of the company in Auckland on the *Taranaki* was celebrated by the

local press, with Mr and Mrs Lachlan McGowan, from the Prince of Wales Opera House in Melbourne, among others, and a Mr W. Bentley (*Evening Star* 1873a August 20, 2). McGowan was born in Ayrshire, Scotland. When only eight years old, he was brought to Australia by a relative. As a result, he was often referred to as an Australian actor. In all likelihood, he had little recollection of his Scottish heritage. He was a well-respected stock actor with Alfred Dampier, George Darrell, and in 1892 with Walter Bentley ('A Chapter from the Reminiscences of the Veteran Australian Actor' 1898, 4). As previously noted, McGowan and Bentley were first onstage together in Auckland. It was the beginning of Bentley's professional career. Bentley debuted on 25 August 1873, as Captain Pertinax in *Not Such a Fool as He Looks*. A critic commented 'Mr and Mrs McGowan took parts which suited them to a nicety and did them of course perfectly in consequence. Mr Bentley ... would have made a hit if he had expended a little more trouble in booking himself up' (*Evening Star* 1873b September 6, 2). Nevertheless, despite such a shaky start, Bentley's friendship and professional relationship with Lachlan McGowan was to endure until McGowan's death in 1899. In 1892 McGowan toured with Bentley through New Zealand and Australia, playing supporting roles in *Hamlet*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Rob Roy*, *David Garrick*, and *The Silver King*. On one occasion when Bentley was ill, McGowan stepped up to take the lead role in *Rob Roy*, earning praise that as a stock actor he had achieved a 'thorough characterisation' (*New Zealand Herald* 1892, 5). Bentley's decision to stop touring in 1895 ended their long-standing partnership in the theatre but not their friendship. Bentley attended McGowan's funeral at Sydney's Waverley Cemetery and laid a wreath in memory of his friend 'Funeral of Mr Lachlan McGowan' 1899, 5).

The second Scottish player to share the stage with Bentley was Henrietta Watson (1873–1964), who undertook two tours in Australia in 1892 and 1899, but she never settled in the country. Watson was born in Dundee to a Scottish theatrical family. In 1892, she was Bentley's new leading lady. She took the leading role alongside Bentley, who played the role of Wilfred Denver, in *The Silver King* in 1892 in Melbourne's Princess's Theatre (Fig. 4). This was a role Bentley reprised almost ten years after he had toured the production in America in 1883–1884. Both Bentley and Watson were praised for their interpretations of the roles, Watson for the 'warmth of affection and the loyalty of wifely devotion' in her role as Nellie Denver ('Princess's Theatre. Silver King' 1892, 7).



Fig. 4 ‘Walter Bentley as Wilfred Denver in *The Silver King*, now being so successfully reproduced at the Princess’s Theatre’, *Herald*, Melbourne, 23 August 1892 (Bentley is holding the engraved silver-topped ebony walking stick presented to him by J. C. Williamson in 1892 for *The Silver King*, now in the collection of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney. [Powerhouse Collection—Walking stick presented to Walter Bentley by J C Williamson](#))

When Bentley’s company left for Tasmania, Watson did not join him. However, she did reappear on stage with him at Sydney’s Criterion, in 1899, in *The King’s Musketeers*. Watson and Cecil Ward took the leading roles. Bentley was in a supporting role as the Cardinal, a role for which one critic thought he was unsuited (*King’s Musketeers* 1899, 14), a strange comment given the clerical environment in which Bentley was raised. Moreover, when Bentley played the Cardinal in *Richelieu*, from Scotland in the 1880s to New Zealand in the 1890s, praise was

forthcoming for his portrayal of the cleric.<sup>5</sup> Bentley must have treasured his time with Henrietta Watson as he wrote an article about her. It transpired Bentley knew Watson's father in Scotland, although her family moved to London when Henrietta was three years old. She compared Australian theatres most favourably with those of other countries, suggesting that there was a 'naturalness' to productions. Reflecting philosophically, she told Bentley that she would like a farm, and horses, 'and all that sort of thing, I suppose I will never have that'. Bentley closed his profile for the *Star* by writing that Watson was 'the best Nellie Denver' that he had ever seen, as the actress farewelled him and headed to the stage (Bentley *Australian Star* 1899, 3).

Returning to the 1913 catalogue of stars in 'Australian Stage History', after Bentley, the second Scottish actor mentioned is Julius Knight (1862–1941). He enjoyed an illustrious reputation in Australia as a touring star, rather than as a resident actor. He and Bentley did not share the same stage. Knight, born in Dumfries, toured Australasia extensively over five tours, from 1890 to 1916 (Murphy 1995, 318–319). His repertoire in romantic costume drama was quite different to Bentley's, which focussed on Shakespeare and melodrama. There were a few similarities between Bentley and Knight. Both adopted stage names that retained their initials, Bentley from William Begg, and Knight from James Kirkpatrick. Both were born into families which adhered to Presbyterianism's abhorrence of the theatre, although as a child Knight was taken to concerts and the circus (Kelly 2009, 73). Both toured Australasia extensively, Knight even making it to Perth, Western Australia. Knight was rather reserved, private, and single, a contrast to Bentley's vibrant lifestyle and marriages. Reporters were constantly looking out for celebrity news:

Another company which is at present resting on its laurels in Sydney is that of Mr Julius Knight. I saw Julius the other day standing in the door of a tailor's shop and looking as if he had just achieved a new sartorial triumph. He was chatting with Mr Walter Bentley, and they seemed keenly interested in each other's conversation. (*Mirror of Australia* 1916, 13)

<sup>5</sup> See letters from two scholars of St Andrews' University, Scotland, Principal Tulloch (2 August 1880) and Professor Theo Baynes (27 July 1880), praising his performance in Richelieu, Baynes comparing Bentley's performance favourably with those of Charles Kean and Mr Irving (The Bentley Papers, Box 1X, Red Scrapbook, 65). His later performances were similarly praised, Otago Daily Times commenting Bentley's performance as Cardinal Richelieu 'will challenge comparison with the best impersonations of the character we have had' (19 January 1892, 2).

In January 1917, Knight was reported as saying he wanted a ‘fixed, settled, comfortable home’ (Kelly 2009, 88) and he returned to Britain via America. To farewell him, Bentley organised a reception at Paris House, then Sydney’s most glamorous restaurant, frequented by the city’s high society, intellectuals, actors, and writers.

To complete my summary of the actors most important to Walter Bentley’s stage career in Australia, I present abbreviated accounts of the two English-born actors who enjoyed close professional relationships with Bentley, George Rignold (1834–1912) and George Titheradge (1848–1916). Rignold was born into a theatrical family. He toured Australasia in 1876, settling in Sydney in 1884 (Fotheringham 1995a, 502–503). As noted, Rignold and Bentley co-wrote *Dreyfus or Vive la France*, a play that received a cool reception. London newspapers lampooned Australia’s literary contribution to British drama recalling the long-past history of ‘two formerly well-known London actors, Mr George Rignold of Drury Lane, and Mr Walter Bentley of the Lyceum, and brother of Mr Faithfull Begg MP’ (*The Daily Chronicle*, quoted in ‘Music and Drama’ 1900, 31). Titheradge toured Australia three times from 1879 to 1900, and from 1908 he resided in Sydney (Fotheringham 1995b, 600). He supported Bentley in Bentley’s production of *Hamlet* at Sydney’s Criterion in 1909. Titheradge and Bentley co-founded the Actor’s Association of Australasia in 1912 (Wallace 2020/2021), Titheradge taking the role of President, and Bentley Secretary. In 1915, as a publicity stunt to raise funds for charity, Bentley and Titheradge—‘his greatest rival in the past’—had a duel at Sydney’s White City for Actors’ Day, ‘not [for] the love of a lady, perhaps, or a big purse with the large end for the winner and the narrow portion for the loser; but a question of reputation that is worth much more than any amount of money or any number of ladies’ (‘Duel in Sydney’ 1915, 2). The event was said to attract 10,000 spectators.

### SETTLING INTO SYDNEY

While, as I have shown, Bentley did not have substantial relationships with Scottish performers, whether theatre-migrants or touring actors, from the time he settled in Sydney he maintained his connections with the Scottish diaspora, arranging many of their festivities, from lectures on Robert Burns in St Stephen’s Church, Philip Street, Sydney (demolished 1935), and occasionally in front of the Burns statue in Sydney’s Domain, to reprisals of his lectures, such as ‘Fragments of Scotia’ and ‘Scottish Wit and

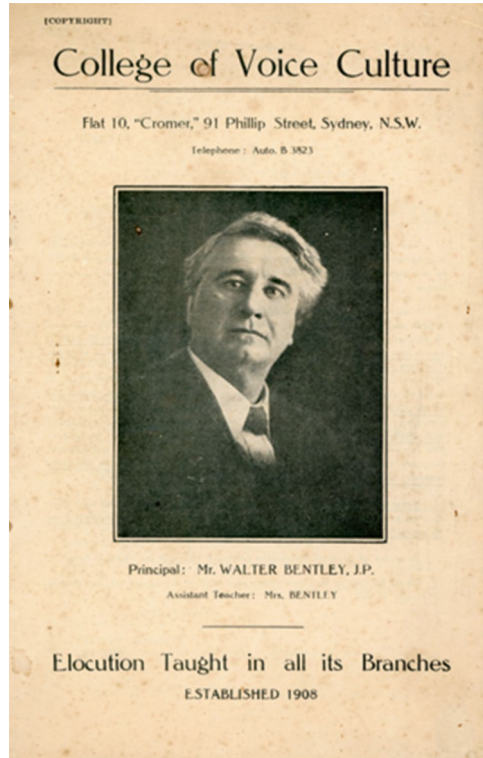
Wisdom', designed particularly to appeal to Scottish audiences. He choreographed the Highland Society's New Year celebrations. *Rob Roy*, once a stalwart of his repertoire, which always drew the Scottish diaspora, was now rarely performed. However, in Brisbane, in 1909, Bentley invited the Australian cricket team to participate in a performance of *Rob Roy* as walk-ons, representing the Highlanders ('In Borrowed Kilts' 1938, 6). During the 1890s, Bentley presented his version of the Passion Play of Oberammergau, usually with choral accompaniment. Now, coinciding with Easter and Christmas, he presented his *Passion Play* in Sydney, Adelaide, and Melbourne. He directed civic events for a wide range of organisations, including Boy Scouts, Masonic Concerts, Patriotic Concerts on Empire Day, 24 May (formerly celebrated as the birthday of Queen Victoria). In 1910, he established his college of elocution and dramatic art, training the next generation of actors and actresses (Fig. 5), and producing monthly costume recitals with the Walter Bentley Players in St James's Hall in the city.

In 1913, Bentley announced his farewell from the stage. Why? asked the press, there 'seems to be a fairly numerous Bentley cult in Sydney' ('The Walter Bentley Farewell' 1913, 3). Retirement from the stage did not mean retirement from his college nor from public life. Bentley was not silent, and his profile remained prominent as he wrote regularly for newspapers, letters to the editor, and opinion pieces. He was busy and ambitious, developing wider circles of influence. Bentley's name was on invitation lists for government events and Town Hall festivities. He attended balls, seemingly solo. As secretary of the Actors' Association of Australasia, he hosted soirées for actors, inviting the city's influential people. He was an adjudicator for the Commonwealth Eisteddfod, an active member of the Shakespeare Memorial Committee, suggesting ideas to both the Committee and newspapers to celebrate the anniversary of Shakespeare's death in 1916, and then the tercentenary of the publication of the First Folio in 1923. In Sydney, he organised a glamorous welcome for Ellen Terry—who he knew through Henry Irving—during her visit to Australia in 1914.

In 1916 Bentley stood for election one last time, the fifth time he had unsuccessfully put his hat in the ring. His bonds with politicians were always strong. He had regularly associated with politicians, from his rescue from the law in 1866 by Alexander Stuart, a future premier of New South Wales, to friendships in the 1890s with Scottish-born politicians, including Sir Robert Stout, New Zealand's Prime Minister, the Honourable



**Fig. 5** College of Voice Culture, Established 1908 (Bentley's college was actually established in 1910). Private Collection



John Henry, Tasmania's Treasurer and an ardent Federalist, and Sir Thomas McIlwraith, three times premier of Queensland. Letters and telegrams from these gentlemen in Bentley's scrapbooks attest to these relationships, John Henry admitting in a letter to Bentley, dated 11 May 1893, that he even delayed a Tasmanian Cabinet meeting so he could see Bentley in *Hamlet* (*The Bentley Papers*, Box 1X, Green Scrapbook, 100). In 1911, Bentley entertained Sir Joseph Ward, Prime Minister of New Zealand, who was en route to Britain. As an emigrant himself, Bentley expressed his views on White Australia in a polemical piece in favour of emigration but warned against an 'invasion by eastern hordes' ('White Australia' 1909, 12). He was vice-president of the Overseas Club, which advanced imperialism and British sentiment. He campaigned vigorously for the temperance movement, the early closing of hotels, and sobriety, for

recruitment for the war effort and organised events for the War Chest Fund. He applied to be a censor of plays and films in 1916, gathering together some thirty-eight influential referees, including politicians, academics, theatre managers, social reformers, and the Archbishop of Sydney. His application, held at the National Library of Australia, Canberra,<sup>6</sup> was unsuccessful. His more enduring relationships were with the Scottish diaspora: he was a life member of the Highland Society of New South Wales. Given his role in founding the Actors' Association of Australasia, it is not surprising that he was a life member of the association. He was a Member of the Council of the Shakespeare Society of New South Wales.

In February 1918, his daughter—my mother—was born. In March 1918, he married Melba Watt, claiming he was a widower.<sup>7</sup> By 1918, if not before, Walter Bentley, the theatre-migrant, was truly a Scottish-Australian, now tied to Australia by family (Fig. 6).

## CONCLUSION

Whereas Bentley had seemed equivocal about emigrating to these far-distant lands, unlike other Scots, who arrived with determination to establish a new life, yet each time he had settled in Australasia and built supporting networks—in Dunedin through sport and religion, and in Brisbane through civic efforts and educational opportunities. It was on his third attempt to emigrate, when he chose to leave Britain without any incentives but with personal commitment, that he successfully became a theatre-migrant, adopting an Australian diasporic identity, reflecting Proudfoot and Hall's migrant hybridity (2011, 51), both an absence and a presence, connecting his Scottishness with a dominant Australian existence.

Although his daily life was as Australian as any locally born actor, Walter Bentley clung to his Britishness, and to the British Empire, and especially to his Scottish identity—though to my knowledge he never wore kilts, nor played the bagpipes. Through the Scottish diaspora he had established his credentials and his agency as a renowned professional actor in the Australian

<sup>6</sup> Copies of testimonials received by Mr. William Begg (Walter Bentley), on his application for the position of censor in connection with plays and films, Sydney—December, 1916 (nla.gov.au).

<sup>7</sup> Consideration of whether Bentley was a widower in 1918 is outside the scope of this paper. He married Florence Grant in Scotland in 1887. She died in Britain in 1928, a year after Bentley's death in 1927. There is no record that I have found of a divorce.



**Fig. 6** The Walter Bentley Family: Walter, Willma, and Melba, 1919. Photo May Moore, Sydney. Private Collection

colonies. He had benefited significantly from their enthusiasm and support, their welcomes at times overwhelming, providing opportunities for fawning publicity. Their patronage of his performances was generous to a fault, reflecting their pride in supporting one of their own countrymen on the stage. At every step of the way Bentley benefitted from the Scottish diaspora to consolidate his position onstage. But it was his bravura, creativity, and persistent efforts that cemented his role in Australian society, in Brisbane as much as in Sydney, exploiting his Scottishness—independence and a strong work ethic—and his theatrical abilities.

Through his pupils at Bentley's College of Voice Culture, Bentley's enduring impact in Australia, as he rightly predicted—'with the experience I have behind me, I hope to be the means of bringing out many young people with gifts of a stage character' (Bentley 1915, 52)—was transferred to the next generation of Australian actors and actresses. He had genuinely plunged into Australian society, a theatre-migrant and a Scottish-Australian.

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# From Cape Workers and ‘Carriers of Culture’: Migration, Citizenship, and Race in the German Empire

*Lisa Skwirblies*

Surprisingly, we find little to no evidence that theatre professionals migrated to the German colonies on the African continent in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Unlike other empires, Germany never established a standing theatre—an opera house or a national theatre—in its African settler colonies. Despite not having a standing theatre, migrants to the German colonies, either as settlers or as labourers, still engaged in a diverse range of theatre practices as a pastime. Migration played an important part in the German colonial discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially with regard to the question of *emigration* to the colonies, both of German settlers and labour migrants from other European colonies on the African continent to the German colonies. In both cases, citizenship, and race—and the questions surrounding them—played a crucial role. This intersection of migration,

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citizenship, and race in colonial discourse is often overlooked in the histories of theatre-migration. This is particularly crucial as nation-building went hand-in-hand with empire-building in the German context and because the overseas colonial project greatly contributed to the making of ‘modern Germans’ (Kundrus 2003) at home.

While conceptions of German theatre history have mainly centred on the theatre’s contribution to the nation-state, the history of theatre in Germany’s empire has not received the attention it deserves. Focusing on empire, and more specifically on colonial history and its contributions to conceptions of nineteenth- and twentieth-century German theatre history, helps us understand the social and political reverberations for the German nation and the colony and metropole relations. While conceptions of nation influenced the colony and vice versa, the imagined influence rarely matched reality. As Laura Ann Stoler and Frederic Cooper argue in *Tensions of Empire* (1997), ‘[i]mperial states did not have pristinely metropolitan existences that then got transported, in however complex a way, to the colonies’ (22). Instead, the relationship was less clean and direct, with an imagined German community in an imagined relationship to its African colonies, and with colonial encounters on the African continent being shaped by conflicts and debates in Germany.

A concrete expression of this imagined community-in-progress was the building of settler colonies on the African continent, part of a plan to turn the former colony of German South-West Africa (GSWA, today’s Namibia) into a ‘New Germany’ (Kundrus 2003). Realizing this plan required considerable emigration from Germany to GSWA. Emigration, though, both to GWSA and to other countries, challenged the parallel goal of German nation-building. If considerable numbers of German citizens left Germany to become citizens of other nation-states, how could Germany itself build a nation? Large waves of Germans, for example, emigrated to the United States at the end of the nineteenth century, becoming US citizens after arriving. Emigration to the colonies presented an alternative, a destination where the empire would not ‘lose’ citizens and where they would instead remain, culturally and legally, German. A wrinkle in this plan was the reality of large waves of emigration from Germany to the United States, which peaked at the end of the nineteenth century, while on the African continent emigration to the newly established ‘protectorates’—as the colonies were euphemistically called—was a less-popular destination. To sway average German émigrés, colonial publicists and enthusiasts from the German upper-middle class started campaigns in the German metropolises



promoting the new start and 'adventure' that awaited emigrants in their life as a settler in the African colonies. To fully understand this experience and the performance repertoire of German colonial settlers, though, requires understanding the context and debates around race and citizenship that awaited settlers in the colonial context.

This chapter focuses on the performance repertoires of two specific groups of migrants in GSWA. One group were German colonial settlers who organized theatre and literary societies in the service of imperialism's project to transport 'German culture' to the African colonies. The second were the so-called Cape workers, a large group of African labour migrants from the neighbouring British Cape Colony who came to work in the diamond mines of GSWA at the beginning of the twentieth century, and whose performance repertoire included regular staged performance events that challenged the strict racial-segregation laws in place under German colonial rule. Both performance repertoires reveal how the discourse of migration in (and to) the colonies was wrapped up with the discourse of citizenship in the German metropole at the turn of the century. What bound these two discourses was the question of 'race,' which to a large extent still informs current debates about, and conceptions of, the figure of the migrant in Germany and Europe.

### COLONIAL SETTLERS AS CARRIERS OF CULTURE

Once they arrived in GSWA, most German colonial settlers, according to historical records, found that 'staying German,' both culturally and legally, was easier said than done. Part of this difficulty stemmed from the legal status of the colonies themselves, which were neither independent nor parts of the empire. While they were subject to the sovereignty of the German empire, the colonies were at the same time not constitutionally incorporated, meaning that citizenship for German settlers in the colonies—as well as the local African population in GSWA—was not clearly defined. The German empire had three categories of citizenship: *Reich* citizen, foreigner, and colonial subject. The local African population in GSWA were classified as colonial subjects, not as *Reich* citizens (i.e., members of the empire). Legal ambiguity bled into the judicial system in GSWA as well. Lacking defined legal codes in this home of a 'new start,' colonial governors developed their own legal system. In addition to ill-defined citizenship categories, colonial residents also had to contend with a legal system that classified residents as either 'natives'

or ‘non-natives.’ Non-natives retained their citizenship (and were referred to accordingly as ‘German,’ ‘British,’ ‘Italian,’ etc.), while the status of ‘natives’ was never qualitatively defined. This ambiguity allowed race to be introduced into law for the first time. While the law in the German empire never mentioned racial definitions (even the classification of ‘native’ made no mention of race), the new ‘native’ classification was a legal void that allowed colonial governors to introduce race into a new, self-made dual legal system. Introducing race would come to fuel future debates around citizenship and race, especially on ‘mixed-race marriages,’ which were banned in GSWA in 1905 (El-Tayeb 2017).

The historical link between race and German citizenship, both within Germany and in the German colonies, has had lasting consequences for ideas about racial purity and ‘Germanness.’ In comparing French and German citizenship, for example, Roger Brubaker (1992) concluded that Germany’s 1913 citizenship law was based on an ethnocultural, *Volk*-centred understanding of statehood (1) that continued as the basis of German citizenship law into the 1990s. While Brubaker limited his history to citizenship law within Germany, Historian Lora Wildenthal (1997) built on Brubaker’s work and expanded the scope to the German colonies to find out ‘how German citizenship law was intended to preserve “Germanness” and how it was organized by gender hierarchy and race’ (1997, 263). In researching several cases of disputed citizenship resulting from mixed-marriage bans, and the debates surrounding them, Wildenthal found that German citizenship was more than *Volk*-centred; it was race-centred as well. The argument for the 1905 ban centred on the children of mixed marriages, who would inherit their German father’s citizenship, and with it all the rights of a German Reich citizen (including the right to vote and hold public office). Wildenthal shows that the ban was racially motivated and intended to preserve racial purity. She cites a GSWA governor’s deputy, who, in drafting the 1905 ban, wrote that ‘these consequences are of a high degree of seriousness ... Not only is the preservation of the purity of the German race and of German civilization here very substantially impaired because of them [the children], but also the white man’s position of power is altogether endangered’ (cit. in Wildenthal 1997, 267). This is just one of many examples of a local colonial governor explicitly linking a ban on mixed-marriages to the threatened ‘racial purity’ of ‘Germanness.’

The debates in the colonies were also playing out in the metropole, prompting political action to reform the citizenship law for the entire empire. Concern over racial purity in the colonies fuelled debates in

Germany that mirrored those in the colonies. To German nationalists, migration was a thorn in the eye, with the Polish minority in the Prussian East threatening the 'racial purity' of 'Germanness.' Colony and metropole were thus linked by a common 'concern about defining who was a real, or "racial" German, within the European borders of Germany' (Wildenthal 1997, 266). But the debates in the colony had an unexpected influence on the debates in the metropole, since the 1905 ban limited the patriarchal right of German men to marry whomever they wanted, and, in doing so, to pass on their citizenship to their children. This limitation 'proved to be the most controversial aspect of the debate over mixed marriage' in the metropole (Wildenthal 1997, 268). In other words, in debates about citizenship, the freedom of *white* men was ultimately more important than the fear of losing 'racial purity.' When the new citizenship law was introduced in the German Empire in 1913, colonial lobbyists and the nationalists were likely disappointed that it did not introduce race as a component of citizenship. Instead, Germans residing abroad maintained their German citizenship. It was this background of political turmoil around citizenship and race that informed the performance repertoires of German colonial settlers.

### GERMAN THEATRE IN THE COLONIES

Introducing racial categories into citizenship law had an influence on the micro-dynamics of power within daily colonial life. One way was through culture, which, according to Stoler and Cooper, shapes life—especially around race—in colonies because 'colonial regimes let culture do much of the work of race in establishing distinctions' (1997, 35). Culture is also a powerful ally to other forms of power, as Diana Taylor argues, since '[d]omination by culture, by 'definition,' by claims to originality and authenticity have functioned in tandem with military and economic supremacy' (2003, 12). In GWSA, the cultural phenomenon of theatre took on part of the role of establishing racialized distinctions because it played such a vital role in what was perceived as German 'culture.'

Amateur theatre was a big part of life for the German settler community in GWSA. Even in relatively small towns like Lüderitzbucht, bordering the Namib desert on the coast, settler communities founded theatre and literary societies. Newspaper accounts and archival documents indicate that the regular performances of these societies were popular with settlers. The *Lustbarkeitssteuer* (amusement tax) file in the National

Archives of Namibia, for instance, is full of letters from German hotel and restaurant owners requesting permission for all kinds of public performance events. The repertoire of the theatre societies was mainly comical one-acts, farces, living images, self-written skits, and many musical acts. In addition to performing, members of these societies were also part of the cultural programme for military events, colonial parades, and festivities, and saw themselves as *Kulturträger* (carriers of culture) serving the larger colonial project. In 1913 alone, for instance, Kapp's Hotel in Lüderitzbucht requested permission to hold seven events: a theatre evening, a party with performance elements to honour the emperor's birthday, a masquerade ball, a theatre performance with social dancing afterwards, a performance of the settler's choir, a night of performances by the theatre club of Lüderitz, and a 'King Ludwig evening' hosted by the local Bavaria association that included a beer gala afterwards.<sup>1</sup>

The notion of the *Kulturträger* was built into theatre societies, as were notions of race. Their bylaws specifically stated that their main aim was to strengthen the 'patriotic feelings' and 'race consciousness' of their members and were exclusively white spaces that banned Africans from becoming members.<sup>2</sup> The importance of race as a criterion for membership can be seen in the debates about who would be granted membership. Applicants from England and Italy, for instance, were counted as white and were therefore admitted as members of the theatre societies, while applicants from, for example, Japan were not.

Not all settlers saw themselves as *Kulturträger*, though. Some emigrated to the colonies simply for the freedom it offered them, and thus settler communities were often divided along the lines of class. Even though *Kulturträger* (Kundrus 2003) wanted to preserve 'Germanness' and considered themselves as the 'self-designated heroes' (Wildenthal 1997, 263) of German cultural work, this aim was often more divisive than it was unifying. Some settlers saw life in the colony as a new start, far removed from the regulations and restrictions of the German empire. In addition to leaving their home country for diffuse notions of 'freedom' or 'adventure,' settlers also left for economic reasons, as historian John Phillip Short argues in *Magic Lantern Empire* (2012, 66). White German settlers were thus divided among themselves, with liberal middle class Germans

<sup>1</sup>File BLU 74 L.10, National Archives of Namibia (NAN). All translations are by the author.

<sup>2</sup>See Kundrus (2003) for a deeper discussion of how the German settler community in GSWA saw itself.

on one side and 'a heterogeneous mass of stenographers, clerks, mechanics, metalworkers, travelling salesmen, and artisans' (Short 2012, 66) on the other. This class divide also influenced discussions of race and was even considered a threat to the alleged 'racial' and 'cultural' superiority. Repeatedly, the German liberal middle class claimed that the lifestyle of 'poor whites' in the colonies threatened the socially constructed, racialized society they sought to build based on distinctions between Europeans and Africans. To these Germans, staying 'culturally' German meant staying white, and this needed to be 'legally' protected by limiting German citizenship. In other words, maintaining dichotomies between colonizer/colonized, African/European, and white/Black. Sustaining these dichotomies took hard work and, as I discuss below, these dichotomies were regularly subverted.

### THE CULTURAL PERFORMANCES OF AFRICAN LABOUR MIGRANTS

After 1908, the year that marked the end of the genocidal war that German colonial troops had fought against the Herero and Nama in GSWA, the German colony recruited skilled male labourers from the neighbouring British Cape Colony in large numbers. Not only had the war decimated the local African population, but 1908 was also the year that diamonds were discovered in Lüderitzbucht and mining them required labour from other parts of the world and from other European colonies. During this period, GSWA was a site of high labour migration. As historian William B. Lyon notes, 'between 1904 and 1914, German South West Africa was one of the most attractive labour markets for migrants in southern Africa, including from the colonies that would eventually become the Union of South Africa' (2021, 45).

This influx of workers added to the racial distinctions being made in GSWA and added to the disparities and ambiguities as well. The skilled workforce of West African migrants (particularly those from Liberia) and the so-called Cape Workers, for instance, held an elevated position within the German colony compared to local African labourers, both in terms of wages and privileges. As William Lyon writes, 'they had their own unique and rich social circles, which included a vibrant Christian community, soccer and tennis clubs, as well as gambling and drinking locales' (2021, 45). Many also had better housing than local Africans, and those working for the shipping companies could even live in the white-only parts of town. Part of the explanation for these better conditions was that many Cape

Workers were considered ‘mixed-race,’ which meant that their position in society was ambiguous. Against the backdrop of mixed-marriage bans and the push for racialized citizenship, Cape Workers’ ‘newly created’ position in the racial hierarchy created an ‘ethnic conundrum’ (Lyon 2021) in the increasingly racialized colony GSWA.

The ethnic conundrum Cape Workers presented was one of many conundrums GSWA was dealing with around the end of the colonial war, as the colony struggled with the issues of the economy and race. As migration increased, so did racial segregation policies. While Cape Workers were not subject to the same restrictive racial laws, their status was nevertheless precarious and they were far from enjoying the same freedoms and economic benefits as the white population in GSWA. The Native Ordinances of 1907, for instance, required all Africans above the age of six to carry passes and adhere to curfews, which heavily limited their mobility. The Cape Workers were often suspected of stirring unrest and resistance among the local African workers and were often punished for their unique social position. To prevent local African workers from fraternizing with migrant African workers, the German colonial administration sought to prohibit African labour migration and instead to allow Chinese and Indian labour migrants to enter the colony. The economic needs of the colony thus led to internal tensions: while GSWA needed labour migrants, the influx of those migrants led to new racial distinctions, which threatened the ‘racial purity’ of the colony by challenging notions of whiteness. In other words, labour migration to the colony also revealed just how fragile, flexible, and fluid racial distinctions were and that they were neither set in stone nor ‘natural’. In the following, two performance repertoires of the Cape Workers will be discussed that show how they used their agency to negotiate a unique position in the GSWA racial order and how German colonial authorities responded to this.

### RACIAL MOBILITY AND LABOUR MIGRATION

When diamonds were discovered in Lüderitzbucht in 1908, everything changed for the German colonial empire. Before this discovery, the German colonial project had been an economic fiasco, while afterwards, in the final years of German colonialism, it brought unexpected profits. Yet, it was not technically a German discovery, because Cape Worker Zacharias Lewala found the first diamond while working on the railroad between Lüderitzbucht and Keetmanshoop. Lewala, knowing its significance, handed the stone to his boss, August Strauch, who made a fortune out of

Lewala's discovery by starting a mining company and securing the rights to mine in Lüderitzbucht.<sup>3</sup>

The new diamond industry urgently needed migrant workers. So did railway firms, shipping companies, and small-business owners in the now-booming Lüderitzbucht. Facing mounting labour shortages, businesses called on the German colonial administration to introduce more lenient immigration regulations to make it easier for them to attract and recruit workers. The German colonial administration, though, was opposed to massive immigration—particularly of Cape Workers—because according to them, the policy of the British Cape colony was too tolerant towards its African and mixed-raced populations. The German colony was moving in the opposite direction, with increasingly strict regulations such as the mixed-marriage ban. To colonial administrators, an influx of Cape Workers meant a growing mixed population that threatened the 'racial purity' they sought in the German colony.

Despite the tensions brought about by immigration and race, Cape Workers did settle in GSWA. What the archival records show is that these tensions also materialized in the performance events that became a part of the Cape Workers colonial life. While the colonial archives provide very little evidence of performances by Africans in GSWA, the Lüderitzbucht police files in the Namibian National Archives do mention recurring performance events that white settlers hosted for Cape Workers and of performances by Cape Workers for white settlers, local Africans, and African labour migrants. Cape Workers organized weekly dance evenings in 1913 and 1914 in Lüderitzbucht that attracted a so-called 'mixed' audience. A great deal of evidence for these performance events exists because all 'amusement' in the colony had to be approved by the local colonial authorities in advance and all amusement was taxed.<sup>4</sup> We know from

<sup>3</sup> Diamond prospecting and trade were put under the control of the German Company for South-West Africa, with 50% of the profits going to the German state. In 1913, the profits amounted to 4.7 million Marks (Lindner 2009, 6).

<sup>4</sup> The amusement tax was introduced in German South-West Africa in 1910 after the colony had been granted self-administration status in 1909. All 'public music performances, vocal and declamatory recitals, sport events, expositions and amusements of any kind' were taxed. 'Public events' were those that charged an entrance fee. The local law stressed that 'festivities on the occasion of a patriotic commemoration, events of missionary-, church-, or school communities do not fall under the amusement tax law.' The revenue from this tax was 'for the most part' meant to be used for the 'care of the poor' (Armenfürsorge), without specifying who these 'poor' were and who would decide how it was distributed. See 'Ortsgesetz über die Erhebung einer Lustbarkeitssteuer' (Local law regarding the charging of an amusement tax) in file BLU.74. L.10, National Archives of Namibia.

permission requests, for example, that in 1913 and 1914 Mr Knacke, head of a mining company, requested to have weekly performances, and that Mr Herz, owner of a cinema hall in Lüderitzbucht, requested permission to rent out his cinema hall to a ‘Capeboy’ (the derogatory name German settlers used for Cape Workers) named Dielui to host ‘dance events.’<sup>5</sup>

Taxing these performances gave colonial administrators an opportunity to regulate race and control performance events—especially who attended such events. The archives do not provide much evidence of performance content, but they do discuss in detail who was in the audience and how they were controlled. For instance, in correspondence about a dance event between Mr Herz and the Colonial District Officer, the officer had a clear interest in managing who could watch and with whom, and with whom guests were allowed to dance in the same space after the performance was finished. The rules for performances distinguished between a dance performance for a seated audience and the social dancing that would take place after the performance. It was the social dancing that colonial police were particularly interested in because it gave Blacks and whites the opportunity to socialize and mingle. Since the usual classification of these events was as ‘entertainment for coloreds,’ a white audience was allowed as an exception. To be granted permission, performance organizers had to guarantee that white spectators would be seated separately from Black spectators, and that the white audience leave immediately after the performance. In addition, the African spectators at these events had different curfews according to the different racial categories they were defined by. The Colonial District Officer, for instance, repeatedly asked Mr Herz to ‘make announcements in the dance hall asking all natives to leave the venue at half 10 [21:30] and all Capeboys at half 11 [22:30].’<sup>6</sup>

These performances, with their tiered and segregated rules for audiences, reveal much about race and difference in colonial society. For one thing, the different curfews for ‘Capeboys’ and ‘natives’ visibly differentiate African communities, revealing a stratification among ‘coloured’ colonial society in GSWA. These events also reveal the agency that Cape Workers had within the German colonial system. While it was less than what the white population had, it was enough to organize events such as these. These events also show that Cape Workers enjoyed greater freedom of movement than local African workers: they were allowed to organize

<sup>5</sup> File BLU.74. L.10, National Archives of Namibia.

<sup>6</sup> File BLU.74. L.10, National Archives of Namibia.



commercial dance events, with no indication in the archives that these events were being hosted by a 'native,' a contrast to the indigenous population of South-West Africa.

Most of these dance events went on without incident. However, some records show that Cape Workers' performances might have caused some tension between the colonial district office, which approved event permits, and the mayor of Lüderitzbucht. In March 1913, for instance, he wrote to the colonial district office that 'the municipality is principally against renting out buildings that lie within the district of the city...to "Coloureds".'<sup>7</sup> The mayor continued his requests for 'colour'-based decision making, asking that the district office to 'give the permission for holding entertainment or sporting events of a similar sort to Europeans only.'<sup>8</sup> For colonial officials, though, the amusement-tax revenue seemed to be more powerful than appeals to 'racial purity' since, despite the mayor's requests, archive receipts indicate that Knacke and Diclui continued hosting dance performances. In fact, the number of these events and hosts multiplied over the year, suggesting that German settlers as well as Cape Workers were benefiting financially from them.

In addition to being part of 'the political economy' (Davis 2000, 1) of theatre, these commercial dance events are also an example of the political economy of colonies. Political economy is not a common subject in theatre history. Archival evidence like receipts, tax slips, and permission requests are often overlooked or dismissed as less telling—even less valuable historical sources—than programme booklets or newspaper articles. In the case of GSWA, this type of evidence is some of the only kind in the archives that sheds light on the cultural repertoire of Cape Workers. Examining these—for theatre history unusual—kinds of archival evidence such as those from the colonial tax records thus also challenges dominant methodologies in theatre historiography and provides different understandings and new perspectives on colonizers' thinking and actions, as well as on how the colonial state defined, managed, and controlled the local population. The example of the Cape Workers also suggests the need for different ways of navigating performance in the colonial archive—not under rubrics of aesthetics, but under rubrics of control and economical benefit instead.

<sup>7</sup> File BLU 74. L.10., National Archives of Namibia.

<sup>8</sup> File BLU 74. L.10., National Archives of Namibia.

## CAPE WORKERS' CITIZENSHIP COURT CASES

Cape Workers occupied an 'in-between' space in racialized colonial society. Not indigenous Africans, not white Europeans, they were accustomed to British policies, which many workers used to negotiate a better position for themselves. In doing so, they challenged racial segregation laws in GSWA more generally. Historian Ulrike Lindner, examining Cape Worker court cases and complaints, writes that these workers 'had been raised in societies where race segregation was not foregrounded as much as in German South-West Africa' (Lindner 2009, 11). Less intimidated than the German colonial administration had expected they would be, Cape Workers regularly challenged the strict demarcation between 'white' and 'black' in the German colony. With the help of the British consul, for instance, Cape Workers lodged several complaints against their German employers—a judicial privilege notably not afforded to the indigenous African population in the colony. British authorities also had access to a consul that had been established in Lüderitzbucht that could help them in their disputes with German colonial officials (Lindner 2009, 2). The consul was even able to help some Cape Workers change their racial status by proving their European descent, overnight changing their race from 'coloured' to 'white.' Their new racial status gave them greater opportunities to apply for better positions in the workplace, earn higher wages, and live in the European settlements. William Silke is one Cape Worker Lindner cites as benefitting from this official help. After complaining to the British consul about being treated like a 'native,' having to wear an identification badge, and often being beaten by his superiors, Silke went to court, and with the help of the consul, proved his European descent. German administrators were forced to give him the same rights as a white person in Lüderitzbucht. Similarly, Cape Worker Hawkins proved that his parents had British citizenship, and thus his racial status was also changed, which meant better pay and housing in the European quarters of the city.

The German colonial administration found these ambiguities and interventions to be 'highly disturbing for the self-definition of the Germans as colonizers' (Lindner 2009, 13). In response, the German government limited the duration of Cape Workers' contracts to a maximum of one year and to prohibit them from bringing their wives with them. To curb the growth of a 'mixed-race' population, they also prohibited so-called

'colored women' from immigrating to the Cape because 'migrant groups should not endanger the racial regime of German South-West Africa and even a single coloured housemaid was obviously perceived as a problem for the colony' (Lindner 2009, 13). German businesses in the colonies were opposed to these strict racial measures, and instead were lobbying for Cape Workers and their families to be given permanent residency. The case of the Cape Workers thus reveals how some African communities benefited from and took advantage of the opportunities that transnational business constellations provided for them. The outside perspective these workers brought into the much-stricter racialized system of German colonial governance reveals the extent to which economic interest of the German settler often challenged ideas of racial segregation within the German colonial order. In other words, the case of Cape Workers shows that issues of migration in the colonies were driven by two pressures: while migration fuelled a desire to define a national cultural identity based on racial distinctions and 'racial purity,' it also set loose transnational movements that brought waves of migrant labourers to the colonies to support businesses and entrepreneurs who contradicted or challenged the need for national and racial demarcations. Although they were a space of tension and conflict colonial towns like Lüderitzbucht were in fact highly transnational, with thousands of migrants working in auxiliary, construction, and transport jobs that moved them beyond the binary restrictions of colonizer/colonized. The colonial experience also proves how vital—yet unacknowledged—African migrant labourers were to building a functioning German colony. Their case offers a unique view into the social and cultural practices these labourers faced and the specific position they occupied in the political economy of the German empire, a history that has been largely under-researched.

Through the critical discussion of two different performance repertoires within the colonial context of the German empire, this chapter showed how the entanglement of the discourses on migration, race, and citizenship materialized in the colonial every day in policies about curfews and spatial segregation as well as in often conflicting ideas about economic growth versus colonial ideologies of 'racial purity'. Both theatre communities discussed in this chapter, the German settlers and the African labour migrants, navigated the racialization of migration discourse and immigration policies as well the racialization of the workforce in very different

ways, and allowed me to show how complex and multi-layered the phenomenon of theatre migration in the colonial context really was. By revealing this particular history of theatre migration in colonial Germany, the chapter also hopes to offer a better understanding of current questions and debates about migration in Europe, in which often colonial legacies of the construction of the racialized Other are reactivated in the figure of the migrant.

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PART III

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Imagined Communities, Migratory  
Networks and Spaces of Negotiation



# Migration and the Expansion of German-Language Theatre in the Habsburg Monarchy: Reflecting on Internal Colonisation and Cultural Assimilation

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In the last two decades, there have been numerous works in Austrian cultural studies rethinking the history of the Habsburg Empire in the light of postcolonial theory. Despite the different research perspectives and theses, there is a broad consensus on the following point: Although the Habsburg Monarchy was not a colonial power in the conventional sense, clear contrasts determined life in the empire (Csáky, Feichtinger, Karoshi, Munz 2004, 25). Due to its differences to the models of extra-European colonialism, the term ‘internal colonisation’ was coined to discuss the Habsburg Monarchy. This term indicates that the relationship between Vienna as a centre of power and the Habsburg crown lands was not based

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on territorial conquest and the founding of colonies, as in the colonial empires in the southern hemisphere. Nevertheless, the term shows that certain colonial mechanisms were also prevalent in the Habsburg Monarchy. ‘Internal’ colonisation, therefore, refers to the formation of hierarchical structures between the centre of power (Vienna) and its peripheries (crown lands). The asymmetrical development between Vienna and its crown lands in the political, cultural, and economic spheres was a characteristic feature of the monarchy, as observed by cultural studies scholars Ursula Prutsch and Johannes Feichtinger (2002, 1).<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, I will take a closer look at these cultural asymmetries and hierarchies by focusing on the establishment of professional theatre culture. I argue that the implementation of professional theatre culture in many countries of present-day Central and Eastern Europe was directly connected with the work of the German-speaking theatre migrants. These migrants, who largely came from the territories of present-day Austria and Germany, spread one particular form of theatre in the Habsburg Monarchy: German-language theatre. The following chapter aims to examine the reasons for this transnational migration of theatre artists and the establishment of German-language theatre in the linguistically, culturally, and ethnically very heterogeneous crown lands of the Habsburg Empire. By doing so, I will also show the inseparable link between the internal colonisation, transnational migrations, and cultural assimilations in the territories of present-day Central and Eastern Europe.

The first part of the chapter elaborates on the formation of cultural hierarchies between the ‘high’ German culture and the national cultures, which was one of the main factors behind the transnational migration of the German-speaking theatre artists. Particular interest is paid to the colonial ‘mindset’ which shaped the cultural self-understanding of the different ethnic groups within the empire. The second part of the chapter examines the significance of economic liberalisation and the role German and Austrian immigrants played in the spread of German-language theatre and the formation of cultural landscapes in present-day Central and Eastern Europe. The third and final part deals with the effects of German cultural dominance and points to the inseparable interconnection of internal colonisation, transnational migrations, and cultural assimilation.

<sup>1</sup>For more on the concept of internal colonisation and its characteristics, see: Göttsche, Dunker ed. 2014, Feichtinger 2003, 13–31, Müller-Funk ed. 2002, Csáky et al. 2004, 14–44.



## CULTURAL HIERARCHIES AND COLONIAL MINDSET

The Habsburg Monarchy was a multi-ethnic and multicultural empire with twelve official national languages and a great number of crown and hereditary lands.<sup>2</sup> The equality of national languages and cultures was a constitutional right. In this rich alliance of different ethnic groups and cultural traditions, the German language and culture enjoyed an exceptional status. German was not the official language, but the common language of the monarchy.<sup>3</sup> It was the language of interethnic communication and an essential part of individual and collective identity. German was a status symbol of the aristocracy and middle class, the language of the army, handicraft, and trade, and the language of political power. In contrast to the high social status that German enjoyed, the other national languages were devalued and considered the language of the peasants and uneducated lower classes. One of the most prominent Hungarian singers of the nineteenth century, Rosa Déry, describes this circumstance: ‘[...] German was the dominant language of the Hungarian capital. The upper classes were ashamed to speak Hungarian and even if they could, they denied it’<sup>4</sup> (Déry, quoted in Binal 1972, 93). Similarly, the theatre historian Oscar Teuber points out that Prague, despite its ethnic structure, was a German city in linguistic and cultural terms until the late nineteenth century: ‘The majority of the population was Czechoslovakian, but German was the language of the educated circles and only a small group of scholars and literati sought to cultivate the Czech language’ (Teuber 1885, 93). One of the leading Croatian writers of the nineteenth century, Dragojla Jarnevic, also remarked in her diary:

Until this time [1836] we spoke German with each other. Now, however, I am greeted in Croatian and requested to speak in Croatian. There is talk

<sup>2</sup>The Habsburg Empire included the territories of present-day Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia, Poland, Ukraine, and Romania. The territory and the lands that belonged to the monarchy have undergone great historical transformations that cannot be dealt with here. On this issue, see: Winkelbauer ed. 2022.

<sup>3</sup>Here, it is necessary to refer to two brief historical periods in which German was indeed the official language of the empire. This includes the reign of Emperor Joseph II, who in 1784 declared German as the official language of the monarchy in order to simplify the implementation of central administration. Due to strong national opposition, this decision was withdrawn in 1890. The second period with German as the official language was in the era of Neoabsolutism (1850–1860).

<sup>4</sup>All translations included in this chapter are mine unless otherwise indicated.

about Illyrism and attempts to convince me and my sister not to speak German any more. How am I supposed to give up German when I don't speak Croatian: or not enough to be able to hold a conversation? (Jarnević 2000, 152)

This precarious status of the national languages changed with the rise of the national movements during the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the valorisation and spread of the national languages among the population was a very long, slow process, which was also connected to the strong feeling of belonging to the German cultural circle. The middle and the upper classes read German newspapers and books, attended German-language theatre, and used German in private and public communication.

It may be argued that the language and the culture of an ethnic minority significantly influenced the identity of the largely Slavic population of the Monarchy. This thesis is strongly supported by the printed media: Until the end of the First World War, the German-language press enjoyed a high status throughout the Monarchy and represented hard competition for newspapers in other national languages. In Zagreb, for instance, there had been newspapers in German since 1789. In comparison, the first newspaper in Croatian was not founded until 1835, as Nagy points out:

In 1818, the censor in Budapest, Anton Nagy [...] regretfully noted that he did not receive any manuscripts in Croatian and that the founding of a Croatian newspaper remained unsuccessful because not a single subscriber could be found. (Nagy, quoted in Rumpler 1997, 189)

Along with the German language, literature, and press, German-language theatre also enjoyed particular popularity throughout the entire Habsburg Monarchy. In the territories of present-day Slovenia, Croatia, Slovakia, Bosnia, or Ukraine—to name just a few parts of the monarchy—no professional national theatre was established until well into the nineteenth century. The public demand for art and entertainment venues was great and the German-speaking theatre companies were able to meet these demands. For this reason and because of the general knowledge of the German language, the German theatre played an important role even in crown lands with a strong tradition of national theatre such as present-day Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. In Prague, the German-language theatre

operated until the end of the Second World War,<sup>5</sup> in Bratislava until 1886, in Budapest until 1889, in Temiswar until 1899, in Lviv until 1900, and in the East Croatian town Osijek until 1907. From today's cultural perspective, it is impressive that almost every Habsburg provincial town with barely 10,000 inhabitants had a German-language theatre.

The popularity of German-speaking theatre was not always self-evident. With the rise of nationalism, its status became a source of political and social conflict. German-language theatre was considered a symbol of highly developed Western culture and, at the same time, a symbol of the dominant political power. In contrast, the emerging national theatres first had to establish their audiences and to prove their artistic power. Theatre historian Oscar Teuber writes extensively about the long dominance of German theatre in Prague and the attempts of Czech patriots to establish a national theatre. Teuber's note on the first performance in Czech in Prague in 1785 describes the cultural hierarchies between the German and the national culture: The audience was 'just a small group of nationally-minded men striving for the awakening of the Czech national consciousness, the elevation of literature and the establishment of a folk theatre in the language of the national majority' (Teuber 1885, 158). 'Prague's educated circles thought, spoke and wrote almost exclusively in German and smiled at the patriotic endeavours' (Teuber 1885, 158).

The formation of cultural hierarchies between the German culture and the national cultures was both a result of the different stages of cultural development and a consequence of the deeply rooted colonial discourse. Although 'the colonial reality was highly colourful, manifold [...] and shaped by local circumstances'—as pointed out by historian Jürgen Osterhammel, the formation of political, economic, and cultural hierarchies was one of its fundamental features (Osterhammel 2012, 8). The colonial classification of societies is characterised by 'a very specific mindset' based on the idea of the cultural superiority of the West (Osterhammel 2012, 19). This colonial way of thinking, which divided the world into the highly developed West and the undeveloped South and East, was not only typical of the members of the ruling nations. On the contrary, it was deeply internalised by the small ethnic groups and was crucial in shaping their cultural self-understanding. The great popularity of the German theatre in the Habsburg Empire was also a result of a colonial mindset. Attending

<sup>5</sup> Especially after 1933, Prague became an important refuge for numerous German theatre actors who went into exile fearing National Socialism.

German theatre evoked the feeling of belonging to the ‘highly developed’ culture of the West among the multi-ethnic population of the Habsburg provinces. Against this background, the presence of the professional theatre in German language became a symbol of the cultural development of a particular Habsburg town or crown land.<sup>6</sup>

In the following, I will discuss two further significant reasons for the spread of German-language theatre and the transnational migration of the theatre artists: economic liberalisation and the decisive role of German and Austrian immigrants in the formation of cultural spheres in the territories of present-day Central and Eastern Europe.

### ECONOMIC LIBERALISATION, THE THEATRE BOOM, AND THE ROLE OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE FOUNDING OF CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

From the eighteenth century onwards, the Austrian emperors promoted the immigration of the native population from the regions of present-day Austria and Germany to Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe. Through the systematic migration of the ethnic German and Austrian population, the imperial house secured its own power, especially in the Slavic parts of the monarchy. Ethnic Germans willing to immigrate received numerous privileges. In their new home, they became the forces of political, economic, and cultural life: Trade and industry, the establishment of financial institutions and banks, and the foundation of cultural institutions were in their hands.

Their high level of representation among the deputies of the city magistrate was particularly noteworthy. The members of the ruling nation held a disproportionately large number of posts in the administration, the army, and parliamentary life (Bruckmüller 1996, 295). In other words, ethnic Germans and Austrians held the most important social and political functions. This was a peculiarity of the Habsburg Monarchy and part of its systemic policy, as pointed out by the historian Ernst Bruckmüller (1996).

As representatives of the wealthy and educated classes, native Germans and Austrians preserved the culture and language of their homeland in the

<sup>6</sup>I deal with this issue intensively in the research project Kultur-Macht-Identität (Culture-Power-Identity), funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), at the Institute for Theatre Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich. See the website of the project: <https://kmi.hypotheses.org>. See also: Weber-Kapusta 2017, 2022.

crown lands to which they immigrated. In this context, the establishment of a permanent theatre was of crucial importance. In many parts of the monarchy, these immigrants laid the groundwork for the emergence of a professional theatre culture. It is thus hardly surprising that the first professional theatres performed in German language.

Using theatre journals and almanacs as an important and barely explored source of information, theatre historian Paul Ulrich has gathered data showing approximately how many theatres were active in the individual crown lands of the Habsburg Monarchy. What we learn from this data is that some crown lands in the territories of present-day Poland or the Czech Republic had more German-language theatre venues than the territory of present-day Austria itself (Table 1).

This astonishing expansion of German-language theatre was also closely connected with a growing economic liberalism, which facilitated decisive changes in the theatre licensing system. In 1776, the Habsburg Emperor Joseph II passed a law that permitted the establishment of private theatres and free exercise of the acting profession in the Habsburg Monarchy. According to this law, all actors were permitted to entertain audiences and to earn money with their profession (Hadamowsky 1994, 255). In a short time, countless private and city theatres were built throughout the monarchy. The abolition of the licensing system and the establishment of permanent stages encouraged theatre artists from the territory of today's Austria and Germany to seek engagements throughout the Habsburg Monarchy.

**Table 1** Theatres in the individual crown lands of the Habsburg Monarchy, by Danijela Weber-Kapusta

<i>German-language theatres in the Habsburg Monarchy in the Nineteenth Century<sup>1</sup></i>	
<i>Crown land/Hereditary land</i>	<i>Number of German-language theatres</i>
Czech Republic	436
Poland	388
Hungary	82
Romania	35
Italy	29
Croatia	15
Slovenia	13
Slovakia	12
Bosnia	12

Data are taken from: Ulrich (2006, 2022)

Migration from one provincial town to another, from one crown land to the next, thus became their working principle. As shown in the table above, these theatre migrants laid the groundwork for the establishment of professional theatre culture and ongoing theatre activity in countless towns in present-day Central and Eastern Europe.

Economic liberalisation had a significant influence on labour migration. It promoted the establishment of new German-language stages and created an increasing demand for German-speaking theatre artists. During the period of the old licensing system, the theatre was strictly regulated. Accordingly, there was hardly any competition between theatres, since only a few permanent theatres were allowed to operate in one city. Their foundation depended on imperial or municipal authorisation. An international comparison of theatre liberalisation shows that in the Habsburg Monarchy the liberalisation of theatre took place much earlier than in Germany, England, and France. In England, the abolition of the licensing system occurred in 1843, in France in 1864, and in Germany in 1871 (Balme 2006). The result of the licensing freedom was comparable in all countries: There was a huge increase in theatre stages and an enormous demand for theatre actors. Countless provincial towns in the Habsburg Empire got their first public theatre building in the last decades of the eighteenth century. At the same time, numerous theatre directors, actors, singers, and conductors migrated from present-day Germany and Austria to the Habsburg provinces to meet the increasing demand for theatre.

It is significant that simultaneously with the founding of the first national, municipal, and private theatres in the native German-speaking areas—Hamburg (1767), Mannheim (1777), Deutsches National Theater Vienna (1776), Leopoldstadt Theatre (1781 Vienna), Theater auf der Wieden (1787 Vienna), Josefstadt Theater (1788 Vienna)—German-language theatres were also built in all the administrative centres of the Habsburg crown lands. Some selected examples are presented in the following table (Table 2).

The previous analysis shows the complexity and close interconnection of the causes of the labour migration of theatre artists in the Habsburg Monarchy in the nineteenth century that resulted in the establishment of professional theatre culture in the German language in the territory of present-day Central and Eastern Europe. The transnational migration of theatre artists throughout the multi-ethnic empire was thus closely interconnected with the popularity of the German culture, the intensive

**Table 2** Selected examples of German-language theatres in administrative centres of the Habsburg crown lands, by Danijela Weber-Kapusta

<i>Crown land</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>Theatre</i>	<i>Founding year</i>
Czech Republic	Prague	Gräfllich Thunsches Theater	1779
		Nostitzsches Nationaltheater	1783
Hungary	Budapest	Rondelle Theater	1774
		Festungstheater	1786
Slovakia	Bratislava	Stadt-Komödienhaus	Early 1760s
		Stadttheater	1776
Romania	Timișoara	Deutsches Theater	1761
		Stadttheater	1795
Ukraine	Lviv	Bullas Theater	1789
Croatia	Osijek	Festungstheater	Mid-eighteenth century
	Zagreb	Amadéos Theater	1797

immigration of the German and Austrian population, their leading role in the social and cultural life, and the economic liberalisation.

In addition, the expansion of the German-speaking theatre in the territories of today's Central and Eastern Europe was, in some cases, also closely linked to political interests. The German-language theatres in Bratislava, Budapest, and Lviv are examples of direct political intervention in the cultural landscape of the Habsburg crown lands. In Budapest, two stages were built as a result of the direct intervention of power. Both the Fortress Theatre and the Gisella Theatre were commissioned by the Emperor Josef II (Binal 1972, 40, 80). The mission of both theatres was to Germanize the Hungarian residence city and to foster 'the rooting of German culture in Hungary' (Binal 1972, 40). It is worth noting that the Gisella Theatre (Fig. 1) was one of the largest European theatres of the time, with more than 3000 seats.

Furthermore, the capital of present-day Slovakia, Bratislava—which was known by the German name Pressburg until the twentieth century—was another city where the beginnings of German-language theatre were politically motivated. From 1537 to 1783, Bratislava was the Hungarian capital and coronation city. Here, the theatre performances were an essential part of the court festivities. Their special function was to show 'the splendour of the Habsburg rulers' (Cesnaková-Michalcová 1997, 14).

The theatre and power were also closely linked in Lviv. The highest state authorities, such as the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister, and the Emperor himself, concerned themselves with the work of the German



Fig. 1 German Theatre in Pest (1812–1847). Watercolour by Rudolf von Alt

theatre in this city. Located at the furthest edge of the monarchy, the German-language theatre in Lviv had to symbolise the power and greatness of the empire for both domestic and foreign populations (Got 1997, 765–766).

In the last part of this chapter, I will return to the question of power structures that exerted a decisive influence on the formation of cultural spheres in the Habsburg Monarchy in the nineteenth century, focusing on the multi-layered connection between internal colonialisation, transnational migration of theatre artists, and cultural assimilation.

#### INTERNAL COLONIALISATION, MIGRATION, AND CULTURAL ASSIMILATION

As shown in the first part of the chapter, the cultural asymmetries and hierarchies between the German culture and the national cultures were a particular feature of the Habsburg Monarchy. It can be argued that the dissemination and the long dominance of the German-language theatre in



present-day Central and Eastern Europe was, to a significant degree, a result of internal colonisation. The transnational migration of German-speaking theatre artists throughout the multi-ethnic empire was also engendered by the processes of internal colonisation. In the following, I will summarise the most important forms of internal colonisation that had a decisive influence on the formation of the cultural spheres and the transnational migration of the German-speaking theatre artists.

First, the long dominance of the German language in the private and public sphere of the entire empire is one example of a power structure and a form of the internal colonisation. Second, the prominent social position of German and Austrian immigrants and their influence on the creation of cultural spaces is a further form of power. Third, even the adoption of economic reforms, such as liberalisation of the market and abolition of the theatre licensing system, are power structures passed in Vienna and implemented in the crown lands. Fourth, the ‘assimilation’ of the colonial mindset that divides the cultures into the ‘developed’ German culture and the ‘regressive’ national culture by the multi-ethnic empire population, is a representative example of internal colonisation. All four forms of internal colonisation were closely interconnected and had a decisive influence on the formation of the cultural spheres and the status of German-language theatre.

Nevertheless, the social, political, and cultural reality of the Habsburg Monarchy was multi-layered and changed over the course of history. The effects of internal colonisation should therefore not only be considered negatively. It can be argued that the internal colonisation also had positive effects. I will thus finish this chapter by pointing out the key role that the German-language theatre played in the formation of audiences and professional theatre culture in many countries in present-day Central and Eastern Europe.

The multi-ethnic population of Habsburg’s cities provided an enthusiastic audience for the German theatre. One crucial reason for the popularity of the German-language theatre was its longstanding monopoly position. In many parts of the monarchy, there were no public facilities and professional theatre artists that could respond to the growing demand for entertainment and art. Against this background, the German-language theatre became the first public institution that was able to meet the growing need for regular entertainment in a society that was extremely diverse in terms of class, culture, and ethnicity.

At the same time, the German-speaking theatres became a model for the local population in establishing their own national theatres. There is very lively research on this topic, mainly at the level of national theatre history.<sup>7</sup> However, there is widespread agreement among researchers about the model function that German-language theatre played in the emergence of national theatre cultures in the area of today's Central and Eastern Europe. For example:

The emergence of the Croatian national theatre cannot be analysed without reference to the Austrian theatre landscape. (Batušić 2017, 143)

German-language theatre in Budapest not only provided entertainment, but also made a significant contribution to the development of Hungarian theatre. (Binal 1972, 81)

The German-speaking Landestheater in Prague was the mother house of the Czech theatre. (Teuber 1888, 699)

The organisational and aesthetic peculiarities of the German-language theatre—such as the repertoire, the acting style, the parts and genres, the duration of the season, and the number of weekly performances—in short, all the elements of professional theatre practice, were used as models for countries establishing their own national theatre traditions. Such aesthetic and conceptual assimilations of a foreign theatre culture not only created new national traditions but also influenced or changed the existing ones. The establishment of German-speaking theatre in Croatia, for instance, put an end to the tradition of school theatre. However, this process was not only an example of spreading the culture of a ruling country but also an indication of a growing demand for permanent arts and entertainment venues. It is no coincidence that today all five Croatian national theatres are located in cities that were home to professional German-speaking (Zagreb, Osijek, Varaždin) and Italian theatres (Split, Rijeka) in the nineteenth century (Fig. 2).

Today, it is nearly impossible to imagine what the theatre landscape of Central and Eastern Europe would look like without the cultural transfers provided by the German-language theatre and without the work of the theatre migrants as carriers of the professional theatre tradition. Nevertheless, the question of German cultural transfer continues to divide

<sup>7</sup> See series 'Theatre History of the Habsburg Monarchy' and 'Theatre History of Austria' published by the Austrian Academy of Sciences. <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/ikt/publikationen/reihe-theatergeschichte-oesterreichs>.



**Fig. 2** Municipal Theatre Osijek (Croatia), 1868, built as a German-language theatre venue. Watercolour by Branko Šenoa

opinions. As the previous analysis has shown, the internal colonisation is inextricably linked to cultural transfer and cultural assimilations. The internal colonisation caused migration, and this, in turn, caused cultural transfer and assimilation.

With the formation of postcolonial theory, sensitivity for the complexity of power structures that were constitutive for the formation of cultural spaces has grown. Postcolonial studies have shown that it is not possible to deal with questions of cultural transfer and cultural assimilation without taking into account the political and social context. This argument challenges the methodology of traditional theatre historiography, which primarily pursues aesthetic issues and ignores the power structures of the period and geographical space.

In the ideological discourse of many Slavic states constituted after the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy at the end of the First World War,

belonging to the Habsburg empire was characterised by ‘black days of foreign suppression’ (Andrić 1895, 31), in short, by experiences comparable to those experienced by colonies. Postcolonial studies show how complex and multi-layered the Habsburg reality was. Even the contemporaries, and especially the leaders of the national movements, were deeply ambivalent towards the German-language culture, for whom it was both an obstacle to the development of an independent national culture and, at the same time, a necessary aesthetic model (Bobinac 2014, 309–310).

As repeatedly pointed out above, the German-speaking theatre migrants mediated and implemented the Western model of professional theatre culture in the countries of today’s Central and Eastern Europe. The role they played in the formation of cultural landscapes and their importance in scientific research are thus evidently opposed. Today, it is impossible to examine and evaluate their influence on the transformations of cultural landscapes separately from the prevailing political circumstances. This is an urgent research issue that forces us to rethink our cultural history and the methods of theatre historiography by focussing on the close interplay of political and cultural developments.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, such an interdisciplinary approach shows that theatre historiography too can provide new perspectives for disciplines such as history and social and political sciences.

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<sup>8</sup>An important contribution to this goal is provided by *Theaterwissenschaft postkolonial/decolonial*, eds. Sharifi and Skwirbli (2022). See, in particular, the introduction.

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# Transnationality: An Advantage or a Hindrance for a Career in Theatre? Swedish Actors in Finland, the Struggle for National Independence, and the Question of Language on Stage

*Rikard Hoogland*

## INTRODUCTION

The borders within the Nordic region have undergone multiple changes over the last four centuries. For example, until the war in 1644, the southern part of Sweden was under Danish rule and Norway was part of Denmark until 1814 when it entered a union with Sweden. Sweden oversaw foreign policy, with the Swedish king also serving as the king of Norway. This lasted until Norway gained independence in 1905. Sweden and Finland, however, were one country until 1809 with no disparities between the two regions in terms of legislation and taxes (Hårdstedt 2023). Consequently, Swedish actors have a long history of touring in

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Finland and performing for the Swedish-speaking population there. This trend continued even after Finland and Sweden became separate entities after Sweden's defeat against Russia in the Finnish War in 1809, as a result of which Sweden had to cede large areas to Russia in the Treaty of Fredrikshamn. Crossing the border between Sweden and Finland was largely unproblematic, and when the regular steamship service was established around 1830, the opportunities for mobility were further enhanced (Andersson 1936, 1). Vaasa was commonly the connection point for most of the tours to Finland, rather than Helsinki, the capital. Numerous tours concluded in Turkku and some reached as far as Viipury, situated near the Russian border (Rosenqvist et al. 1998, 67, 85, 103). Various Swedish actors, who were predominantly prominent actors from Dramaten or Albert Ranft's theatres in Stockholm, either signed short-term contracts in Helsinki, or appeared regularly as guests in Finland, whereas others emigrated to the neighbouring country. In this chapter, I aim to focus on two of these migrated artists: the actor Ernst Ahlbom (1866–1933) and the actress Karin Swanström (1873–1942),<sup>1</sup> both of whom were engaged by the national Svenska Teatern in Helsinki among others. The professional biographies of these migrated artists—as will be shown—testify not only to the transnational character of Scandinavia during the nineteenth century but also, in parallel, to the process of nation-building and the creation of national imaginaries through and within theatre.

The source materials used consist of articles, interviews, and reviews from the daily press and periodicals, archival material from Ranft's theatre company and from The Swedish Theatre in Helsinki, as well as autobiographical sources.

## THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE AND CONFLICTS ABOUT THE STAGE LANGUAGE

Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish have common language roots, which mean that the different languages can more or less be understood in all three countries. Finnish, on the contrary, has different roots to the other Nordic languages. In Finland, Finnish and Swedish have been the official languages since 1919, even if today only 5 per cent of the population

<sup>1</sup>Karin Swanström was born Svanström but used both spellings during the period under research. When she started her film career, she used only Swanström, probably to give her name an international flair.



speaks Swedish as its mother tongue.<sup>2</sup> Swedish was thus a minority language in Finland, used in governmental and bureaucratic contexts and issues that developed when the country was a part of Sweden. But despite the fact that the country was governed as a Grand Duchy of Russia, Swedish was still the main language of government, even when the Russian authorities made unsuccessful attempts to enforce the Russian language. In this context, the struggle for Finnish independence accelerated. Fennomani, a national movement advocating the Finnish language and culture as distinct from Swedish, emerged from the middle of the nineteenth century and was supported by artists, writers, researchers, and politicians. The main goals included the establishment of language rules and the formal organization of the Finnish language. To this end, even some Swedish-speaking actors, who were educated at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm but living in Finland were engaged in the establishment of a Finnish-speaking theatre. Charlotta Raa, for instance, founded a Finnish-speaking theatre school in Helsinki and performed in Aleksis Kivi's *Lea* in Finnish in 1869.<sup>3</sup> One of the leading Finland-Swedish playwrights, Topelius, supported the Finnish-speaking national theatre by also supporting the staging of some of his plays in Finnish, and giving some of them as a gift to the (Swedish-born) artistic director Karlo Bergbom, who worked at the Finnish Theatre<sup>4</sup> (Seppälä 2022, XXXII). The Fennomani movement displayed a negative bias towards Finland-Swedish (also known as Fenno-Swedish), which is a distinct dialect of the Swedish language. The principal differences between Finland-Swedish and Swedish relate to the pronunciation. However, Finland-Swedish also contains some unique phrases and vocabulary. Nevertheless, given that speakers of both Finland-Swedish and standard Swedish are able to communicate with each other, Finland-Swedish is considered a variant of Swedish rather than a distinct language. This also had an impact on the theatre. For example, the ethnologist and linguist Ernst Lagus was convinced that Swedish-speaking Finns could not be trained to speak ordinary Swedish (Thylin-Klaus 2019, 109), and although he even argued for the establishment of a Finland-Swedish theatre in the journal *Finsk tidskrift* in 1894, he felt that

<sup>2</sup>Finnish and Swedish had equal value from 1902 and were national languages from 1919. The status of Swedish is sometimes questioned in political debate today by the far-right party The Finns.

<sup>3</sup>The performance of Alexis Kivi's *Lea* in 1869 was the first official theatre performance in the Finnish language.

<sup>4</sup>He had changed his first names from the Swedish Karl Johan to the Finnish Karlo Juhana.

the language needed further development. In 1914, the headmaster Bernhard Estlander wrote that there were manifest differences linguistically between Finns and Swedes on stage (Thylin-Klaus 2019, 111). This attitude ignored the fact that Swedish-speaking Finns, trained in the national Swedish stage language, had been accepted on stage in Stockholm and on tours throughout Sweden<sup>5</sup> (Stara 2013, 16, 21). Thus, a stage language conflict evolved that was part of a larger debate concerning variations of Swedish in Finland at a time when Finns were demanding a higher degree of national independence. When Konni Wetzter, for instance, was hired as the artistic manager of The Swedish Theatre in 1906, he brought a group of Finnish actors from the Finnish city of Turku to the Helsinki stage. However, they were never cast in leading roles and only appeared in lighter entertainment, not in tragedies or theatrical works considered as high art (Qvarnström 1946, 203). It is likely that some of the mainly Swedish-speaking audience in Helsinki did not believe the Finland-Swedish language to be proper for higher drama, as it was considered a language for ordinary, less educated people and thus simply as broken Swedish. The kind of Swedish that would be accepted on stage was also intensely debated in the Finland-Swedish daily newspapers. In contrast, the Association for Swedish-Speaking Finnish Actors, founded in 1913, strongly advocated for the use of Finland-Swedish on stage. The main argument was that the actors on stage should be Finns speaking their variety of Swedish. Furthermore, the association contended that the actors imported from Sweden tended to have shorter tenures and consequently had less interest in developing the theatre in Finland in the long term. In 1916, The Swedish Theatre finally decided by a narrow majority to become a Finland-Swedish theatre. This was because Finland-Swedish was prevalent at the Swedish Theatre in Helsinki, while National Swedish was the exception. A contributing factor was that the Finland-Swedish-speaking actors were better trained, and the language variant had finally been accepted. From a nationalist perspective, it was crucial that the language used in the national Swedish-speaking theatre in Helsinki was not the National Swedish language. In a pamphlet from 1915, the historian Svante Dahlström wrote that the campaign for a Finland-Swedish theatre was not directed against the actors imported from Sweden, but rather was purely a matter of principle (1915, 39). He underlined that The Swedish Theatre had a function as a training resource for actors from Sweden. Dahlström

<sup>5</sup>The debate about the Swedish stage language in Finland was ongoing until the 1960s.

observed that those actors tended to return to Sweden after a couple of years. He saw two main reasons for this: first, in the development of theatre in Sweden with more contractual possibilities and, second, in the growth of Finland-Swedish theatre in Finland (1915, 42). In its national endeavours, the Swedish Theatre even recruited a language cultivator, the linguist Hugo Bergroth, in 1915 to develop a new form of 'High Swedish' as a stage language, and to erase all traces of local dialects from the scripts. The result, similar to the upper-class language spoken by Finland-Swedish Finns in Helsinki, was a mixture of the national Swedish norm and Finland-Swedish (Tandefelt 2019, 381). Bergroth, who found it impossible for Finland-Swedish Finns to successfully use the standard Swedish language (Thylin-Klaus 2019, 112f.), proposed that the new high Swedish stage language should be made the norm in Finland, in accordance with Svante Dahlström's proposal.

Actors with Finland-Swedish as their main language could be engaged at The Swedish Theatre in Helsinki prior to 1916, but they were consistently given secondary roles. Between 1913 and 1916, they were also permitted to perform in a distinct section of the theatre exclusively devoted to native plays, categorized as light entertainment, often with local origins. Theatre scholar Pirkko Koski discusses an intriguing exception, in the case of Kaarle Halme, who left his position as a star actor at The Finnish Theatre to perform central roles at The Swedish Theatre in Helsinki despite Finnish being his mother tongue. He played six roles in over fifty performances between 1901 and 1903. However, Koski posits that 'it may have been his bombastic style rather than the language used which occasioned his success' (1998, 173).

Both Ahlbom and Swanström were engaged at The Swedish Theatre in Helsinki in the midst of these language battles and nationalistic movements. In Finnish cities other than Helsinki, the language question was not highly prioritized and touring companies had a mixture of language backgrounds. Professionally trained Finland-Swedish actors were an exception at that time, and the situation for actors in Sweden was complicated since the National Theatre was privatized in 1888, leading to a more commercialized repertoire which did not give actors the opportunity to perform in a variety of genres. It is my understanding that Ahlbom and Swanström made conscious use of and deepened their transnational backgrounds in this situation, touring around Sweden and Finland and building connections in the Swedish theatre field that they could use when they organized tours in Finland. Later during the twentieth century, the same

background would not have been so advantageous, given that Finland had developed its own acting training and Finland-Swedish had become the main stage language. But during this time, the Swedish-speaking theatre in Finland provided an opportunity for young Swedish actors to develop their acting and have a stable income. The historian Patricia Clavin points out that transnational communities are concerned not only with the ways ‘relationships are created, but how they are sustained and changed’ (2005, 438). During the careers of the two actors, their relations to the theatre in Sweden changed and the development of the theatre in the two countries diverged. When theatre in Finland became seen as an important tool for nation-building and fostering a national language, the need for and use of Swedish actors changed. The Canadian historian Pierre-Yves Saunier states that ‘the country, a.k.a. the national state, appears as the natural form of organization of societies and the basic unit of historiography’ (2013, 2). He reasons that historians tend to concentrate on ‘a territorial framework. One city, one country, etc. [...] [and] to take them for granted because they are embodied in institutions, in archival resources and in the very organization of our discipline’ (2013, 118). The Swedish-speaking theatre in Finland has largely been ignored by historians in Sweden and not been seen as part of the Swedish theatre. For Finnish historians, the main interest has been in the Finnish-speaking theatre and its development. With a transnational perspective, it is possible to shed light on the interconnections. Both of the actors covered in this chapter wanted to keep the possibility to reconnect to the Swedish theatre system, but in the end, Ahlbom more or less migrated to Finland and Swanström made a successful transition from actress to director and film producer.

### AHLBOM: A TRANSNATIONAL TOURING BACKGROUND

Ahlbom was not educated at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, but rather at Stockholm’s second largest theatre, under the tutelage of director Ludvig Josephson. Josephson, often described as the first genuine theatre director in Sweden, learned his craft in France and Germany (Rosenberg 2017). Ahlbom said that he was inspired by many theatre companies that had made guest performances in Stockholm. His first engagements were in fact with touring companies, beginning with the Elforss company in 1861, touring around Sweden. He joined the Hwasser-Engelbrecht tour in 1888 which brought him to Finland (1919, 48–63). Having experienced the enthusiasm and friendly atmosphere of the Finnish audience, he tried to

arrange a new contract in Finland. When he had to choose between an engagement in the Swedish city of Gothenburg and a touring company in Finland led by August Arppe, previously at The Swedish Theatre in Helsinki, he opted for Arppe and signed a contract with him in 1890. Arppe's knowledge and experience made him the ideal person to help Ahlbom find a more stable position in the Finland-Swedish theatre world. In the repertoire, which mainly consisted of Finland-Swedish folk plays, Ahlbom performed many leading roles. The tour went beyond Finland even to Saint Petersburg where they performed at the Scandinavian Club, a club for the Scandinavian community. In his memoirs, Ahlbom complains that they had to bribe local workers to put up the scenery in the Russian city (1919, 89). The prominent Finnish actress Ida Aalberg was also engaged for this tour with the hope that, by having her perform in the Finnish language, they would attract potential audience members engaged in the Fennomani movement. Unfortunately, Aalberg became ill before the tour started. The tour ended in 1894 and Ahlbom was signed on by Arppe as an actor and director at The Swedish Theatre in Helsinki where Arppe was now serving as artistic director. A copy of a letter to Ahlbom from April 1893 discloses that Ahlbom had already tried to get a job at The Swedish Theatre in that year, but was rejected since the theatre had enough actors skilled in 'his genre'. When he later managed to get a contract at The Swedish Theatre, he performed many leading roles in plays by Sardou and Sudermann. His first main role was as Fouché in Sardou's *Madame Sant-Gène* in March 1895, for which he received positive reviews (Arv. af. S. 1895). For his performance in Kadelburg's and Blumenthal's comedy *The Orient Express*, a critic praised his way of performing 'Dimert Mitrovic with a consequent broken language and a strong colorfulness' (Se. 1895). Ahlbom had probably developed his character during the previous years on tour with Arppe. In the reviews of his performances at The Swedish Theatre, he was nearly always praised for performing stereotypical characters, rather than as one of the leading actors. The repertoire was criticized for being too lightweight.

It is unclear whether Ahlbom was offered a contract extension. In any case, he did not continue with the company. A Swedish daily newspaper reported that Ahlbom was setting up a tour of his own with high class actors and an outstanding repertoire, including dramas by Ibsen, Brandes, and Dumas (Aft. 1895). He had engaged a respected although rather old actor from Sweden, Knut Almlöf, and the German actor Josef Kainz who had previously performed with the acclaimed Meiningen Company and

who was in contact with the Finnish actress Ida Ahlberg (Suutela 2009). However, both of these prominent actors reported in sick and sent doctors' certificates to Ahlbom (Ahlbom 1919, 142). The company's young star actress Edith Keen was infected by smallpox in St. Petersburg and died some weeks later. Ahlbom's troupe's tour of two years ended with a large deficit (Ahlbom 1919, 147).

Nevertheless, the tour had had a rather promising start in Vaasa in autumn 1896. Ahlbom's purchase of costumes in Germany was seen as meritorious (Wasa 1896). The ensemble of nineteen included actors and actresses with Finland-Swedish and native Swedish backgrounds. Despite all the problems, it seems that they were well-received in Finland, but a local paper accused Ahlbom of draining the Finland-Swedish theatre community of its best actors (Wasa 1897). The Finland-Swedish author Karl August Tavastjerna praised Ahlbom's true-to-life performance of a Finnish character, writing that he not only interpreted the character's physical manner but also provided a splendid performance of the local dialect in the part of Finland, speaking as if he were a 'genuine Finn' (*Norra Posten* 1897). Ahlbom described how the Finnish playwright Mina Canth tried to convince him to accept an engagement at The Finnish Theatre, believing that he could surely learn Finnish if he lived in Kuopio for a year (1919, 119). This was more than thirty years before the author Zaharias Topelius stated that it was impossible for a Swedish actor to fully embody the language and attitude of a Finnish character (Seppälä 2022, XXIX).

In 1898, Ahlbom took over the leadership of the native Finland-Swedish theatre. In his autobiography, he complains about his multiple duties as artistic leader with financial responsibility, stage director, and principal actor. The ensemble included Swedish and Finland-Swedish actors. One of the actresses even had a German background, Finnish as her first language, and a professional theatre career in Sweden. The theatre shared space with The Turku Swedish Theatre, but also toured the country. Ahlbom wrote that the audiences were divided in their loyalty and favoured either the Finland-Swedish actors or the Swedes. He kept his position in the company for just one year, finally leaving it in 1900 to return to The Swedish Theatre in Helsinki.

By that time, Ahlbom had clearly achieved a stable position in Finland's theatre community and could act on the 'purified' Swedish stage in Helsinki as well as in Finland-Swedish performances. He had also developed Finnish theatre contacts through the actress Ida Ahlberg and the playwright Minna Canth, who was of Finland-Swedish origin, but wrote

her plays in Finnish (Frenckell 1972, 129). Having toured in Saint Petersburg, throughout Finland and in Sweden, his performances were welcome in different language groups. It seems that Ahlbom did not see language as a hindrance and was open to mixing the two variants of Swedish on stage. In his autobiography, he is critical of the language barriers that were built up at the time between Finland-Swedish and national Swedish, writing that ‘the audience was more or less divided into two different tastes—some preferred Swedish artists and the others wanted only domestic ones’ (Ahlbom 1919, 158). Although economically unsuccessful, his touring theatre group was praised for its artistic quality and had a repertoire that covered a wide range from Finland-Swedish popular plays to the dramas of August Strindberg. Based on his transnational experience, his knowledge of different theatre milieus was impressive and strategically useful in securing a position in the field. In 1903, he received an offer from Stockholm, from Albert Ranft’s theatre company, and returned to Sweden.

#### A TRANSNATIONAL POSITION BETWEEN THREE COUNTRIES

Karin Swanström trained at The Royal Dramatic Theatre (Dramaten) in Stockholm from 1890 to 1892. She was considered a talented student and her performances at Dramaten were praised by the critics. When she left Stockholm in 1895 to go on tour with the acclaimed actor Emil Hillberg, a local magazine expressed sorrow that the most beautiful woman at Dramaten was leaving the city (*Hvad nytt* 1895b). The tour was successful and Swanström received a number of highly positive reviews. The critics were confident that her presence would guarantee ‘even greater triumphs on the stage in the future’ (*Blekinge läns tidning* 1895a). In addition to reviews of her performances, articles about her life were also regularly published both in Sweden and later in Finland. Male journalists found her attractive and wrote about her inner and outer qualities, causing rumours to circulate among the public. Ahlbom, for instance, writes in his autobiography about these rumours that preceded Swanström’s arrival in Helsinki: ‘[they] had much to say about her both as an artist and as a person; she had a temperament that could, if necessary, seem like a free, roaring, violent volcano; her voice was beautiful and could sometimes sound like music; her figure and appearance were charming’ (1919, 162). In 1897, she was in negotiations with both Hjalmar Selander’s touring company and The Swedish Theatre in Helsinki (*Dagens Nyheter* 1897).

After a successful tour with Selander, she reported that she would be furthering her education, studying theatre in Berlin with Ottilie Genée, who led the acting school at The Royal Theatre in Berlin, and with the actress Agnes Sorma (*Halland* 1898; *Hufvudstadsbladet* 1899). Swanström had previously been on a study visit to Berlin, in 1897, where she had apparently established contacts in the German-speaking theatre community (*Helsingborgsposten* 1897). In an interview in 1903 in *Svenska Dagbladet*, one of Sweden's larger daily newspapers, she talked about her previous career, and how she had to choose in 1898 between employment at The Swedish Theatre in Helsinki and a new acting career in Hannover, Germany (O. R. 1903). I have not found any letters or documents that prove that she indeed had any offers from Hannover, but, given the Finnish actress Ida Ahlberg's career in the German-speaking theatre in 1880–1890, it seems possible that Swanström also planned a career on German stages (Suutela 2009). At any rate, Swanström received a position at The Swedish Theatre in Helsinki and, looking at her contracts from 1900 to 1903, it was an advantageous one: in the contract from 1 September 1900 to 1 June 1901, she was given the whole month of February off and was entitled to the entire profit of a performance. Her monthly salary was 700 Finnish marks with an additional gratuity of 800 FMK. I have not found any contracts at the theatre during that year with a higher salary, indicating that the theatre saw her as an important investment. The salary and the repertoire seem to have been an important argument for Swanström's migration to Finland. It is interesting to note that Ernst Ahlbom, although also one of the best paid actors at the theatre that year, was paid 200 marks less than Swanström and received no additional benefits. The theatre was clearly eager to contract Swanström, who was probably a clever negotiator.

Her first role at The Swedish Theatre in Helsinki was in Dumas fils' *La Femme de Claude*. During the second performance, she received a huge bouquet, celebrating her status as a star actress (*Nya Pressen* 1899). The theatre critic of the main Swedish newspaper in Helsinki filled nearly half of his review with praise of Swanström's performance and stage presence. He wrote of her smooth voice, her lovely appearance, her natural presence on stage, and her clear and profound facial expressiveness (Hj. L. 1899). In a review of Hauptmann's *Forman Henschel*, the second production with Swanström during the spring of 1899, the critic writes that Swanström not only played the role, she was the role. He ends his review by declaring that 'it was art, great art' (Un monsieur 1899). The review of her third



role at The Swedish Theatre in *Eva* by Richard Voss is also filled with superlatives. In the autumn of 1900, her employment as a guest performer was replaced by a permanent contract.

At the same time, Swanström was a guest performer in Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken* at the Finland-Swedish theatre in Viipury. Swanström was the main attraction of this tour; and she was the only actress mentioned in the advertisements (*Åbo Underrättelser* 1900). Ticket prices were raised for the tour. Critics and audiences alike were apparently enthusiastic, and floral tributes during and after performances increased in frequency. The press referred to her as the prima donna, sometimes as the star performer, and she now received ovations when entering the stage.

A glance at the daily Finland-Swedish newspapers during 1901 shows that she had gained an important position in society. She was often the main attraction at celebrations and gala occasions, reciting poetry or performing fragments of plays. Her successes on stage were reported beyond the borders of Finland in daily newspapers in Saint Petersburg and Stockholm. If a performance happened not to be top-notch, the flaw was attributed to the play or the role she had been assigned. Taking advantage of this favourable situation, she occasionally made short study trips to Berlin, Vienna, and Paris, sometimes accompanied by a fellow actress from The Swedish Theatre. Thus, the critics often wrote about her understanding of variations in the acting styles of different European countries. For instance, when she played in Michel Provins' *Le vertige*, the critic disliked the play but was impressed that Swanström could make so much out of the role. He attributed this to the fact that she had 'regularly visited Paris and studied the French acting style' (Se. 1902). So Swanström could provide an international flair that the critics and the audience had missed in the theatres in Finland. In the spring of 1902, for her annual benefit performance, Swanström, for instance, selected a play that had not previously been performed in Finland, Ganghofer's & Brociner's *Hochzeit von Valeni*. *Hufvudstadsbladet*, Helsinki's leading daily newspaper, described the sold-out event as a constant celebration of the actress, with grand bouquets continually brought on stage (E. L. 1902).

It is likely that Swanström had an influence on the plays in which she performed, and that her knowledge of contemporary theatre in Germany and France enabled her to suggest plays that she found suitable. Looking at the repertoire at the Swedish Theatre and, in particular, the plays in which Swanström appeared, it is surprising that very little is of Swedish origin. Considering that the language on stage was supposed to be national

Swedish to foster a High Swedish language standard in society, it is surprising that plays from central Europe or Finland-Swedish originals were often chosen.

In May 1902, Swanström organized a tour around Finland with actors from The Finland-Swedish Theatre. She named the tour after herself and none of the other actors was mentioned in the advertisements (*Vestra Nyland* 1902). The tour started in Ekenäs, and included visits to Porvoo, Hanko, Loviisa, Kotka, Viipury, Tampere, Turku, Pori, and Vaasa. Several of the places had a low number of Finland-Swedish citizens, but a large proportion of society partly understood and could communicate in Swedish. It is important to note that none of the actors on the tour spoke national Swedish, so dialogues were performed in the two Swedish language variants. Surprisingly, none of the local theatre critics mentioned this fact, focusing instead mainly on Swanström. The repertoire of this tour consisted of Swanström's previous successes as well as a new play by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, *Beyond Human Power*. The reviewers were grateful that high-quality theatre was being shown around the country and they confirmed that Swanström's acting was exceptional. With her tours and readings, Swanström established herself as an important member of Finland's theatre community.

However, in autumn 1902, the first production of the season at the Swedish Theatre, in which she herself performed a leading role, received harsh criticism. In *Euterpe*, an influential cultural journal founded by young intellectuals, the choice of Georg Engel's contemporary German play *Über den Wassern* was considered mediocre. Swanström herself was criticized for playing roles that always had the same agenda, and for playing them in the same rather tasteless acting style: 'If her one-sidedness is the unfortunate result of a restricted talent, then it is time for her to consider finding new paths' (O.H. 1902). Even the critic in *Hufvudstadsbladet* found the play mediocre albeit affective, but he did feel that Swanström made the best of her role, which was apparently written expressly for her (W.B. 1902). In an overview of theatre in Helsinki published in *Finländsk Tidskrift* (the Finnish Journal), Hasselblatt hailed Swanström in Engel's play but wished she would take on more complex roles (1902). The harsh criticism in *Euterpe* was satirized in the weekly journal *Fyren*, a significant indication that the young group around *Euterpe* had succeeded in using Swanström to get attention. It is difficult to determine how Swanström's acting style had changed and if the criticism was due to her inclination towards a melodramatic style that was lauded by the audience.

There were insistent rumours that Swanström planned to end her contract in Finland. In an interview with a journalist from *Helsingfors-Posten*, she confessed that they were true. She explained that she wanted to perform in Sweden again, while she still was young and capable of performing at a high artistic level (Reporter 1903). Her last appearance at The Swedish Theatre was a benefit performance of Voss' *Eva*. It was again a celebration on a grand scale. The last words of the review in *Hufvudstadsbladet* were 'Welcome back!' (1903). Before leaving Finland, the actress arranged a tour from 3 May to 20 June, starting in Turku, and called Karin Swanström's tour. The troupe consisted of Finland-Swedish actors. Compared to Ahlbom's tours, Swanström had not put much effort into building a unified ensemble. She was probably confident that her own fame would be enough to attract audiences. Swanström left Finland on 8 August on the steamship *Uleåborg* to join Albert Ranft's ensemble after more than five successful years in the country. In Stockholm, the critics were looking forward to her return. But did the memory of the young promising actress at Dramaten ten years earlier bear any resemblance to the diva from Helsinki? And how did Ahlbom fare after his return to Sweden?

### PROBLEMATIC REMIGRATIONS

Although Ahlbom stated in his autobiography that he felt increasingly like a stranger during his occasional visits to Sweden (1919, 167), he ultimately, like Swanström, made the decision to return. The reasons for which both actors left Helsinki, despite Swanström's statement in the above-mentioned interview in *Helsingfors-Posten*, may be to do with the turbulent political situation in Finland at the beginning of the twentieth century. Efforts to strengthen Finnish culture, identity, and language clashed with the ambitions of the Russian government to increase its control over Finland. The Russians attempted to change the country's main administrative language from Swedish and Finnish to Russian, and to consolidate their power in Finland (Hällström-Reijonen 2019; Meinander 2006). This led to huge protests and eventually to the assassination of the Grand Duke Bobrikov in 1904. During Ahlbom and Swanström's absence from the Swedish theatre, the stage language in Stockholm had been developed and professionalized as a result of intense competition between the theatres. Additionally, the Swedish language had evolved differently in Sweden and Finland. So how did the actors cope with it?

In Sweden, both Ernst Ahlbom and Karin Swanström were engaged by Albert Ranft in 1903. Ahlbom wrote that he was engaged by Ranft's accountant, whom he had met by chance (1931, 10). In the Ranft archive, however, there is a letter from Ahlbom to Ranft from 1903 in which he explicitly asks for a contract. Swanström, on the other hand, had direct negotiations with Ranft. It is, nevertheless, interesting to note that these negotiations were probably conducted by her older colleague Emil Hillberg, who often appeared at The Swedish Theatre in Helsinki as a guest performer and had toured with Swanström. This is indicated by a letter to Ranft 1902 in which he more or less urged him to engage the actress: 'She has developed her acting enormously and will certainly be a triumph' (Hillberg 1902[?]). He recommended a monthly salary of 6000 Swedish crowns for the actress. Ranft was known to engage more actors than he needed in his company simply to prevent other theatres from contracting them. Ahlbom's first role with him was in a farce, Anthony Mars' *La Mouche*, playing a young lover, not at all the type of role for which he was suited. It was a minor role in this unsuccessful production, and he was mentioned briefly in only one of the reviews, albeit positively. His second appearance was in a play by Georg Brandes. Ranft had personally stormed into rehearsals and demanded makeup and costume changes, which apparently led to unfavourable reviews, if Ahlbom is to be believed. Ahlbom's role in this production was mentioned in a number of newspapers. The main Stockholm daily newspaper, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, complained that Ahlbom played with a Finnish 'dialect' (Branting 1903) and the critic of *Svenska Dagbladet* felt that Ahlbom misused Brandes' text, although he did not give any details (T. H. 1903). Even the critic in *Dagens Nyheter* was negative about Ahlbom's performance, writing that although he was terrible at the beginning of the evening, he did improve, but not enough [P. H-m. 1903]. Although I have not found any evidence in the Finnish press that Ahlbom had changed his language to be more in line with Finland-Swedish, the comments of the Swedish critics may be an indication that Ahlbom's pronunciation had indeed changed during his time in Finland. It is quite possible that he was influenced by the other actors with whom he had been on tour in a predominantly Finland-Swedish company. When actors of Swedish origin with long-term contracts at The Swedish Theatre in Helsinki started to adapt their language, the project to foster national Swedish amongst the audience had failed.

In his autobiography, Ahlbom wrote about all the blunders made by Ranft as the leader of the tour. In the end, he succeeded in terminating his

contract with the ‘theatre king’. In this respect, Ahlbom’s memoir contradicts many descriptions of Ranft’s successful company and leadership. Returning to Finland, Ahlbom had no problems re-entering the Finland-Swedish theatre world. He worked again at The Swedish Theatre in Helsinki, organized tours in the Nordic countries and was even, for a time, leader of The Swedish Theatre in Vaasa. He could be considered to have emigrated to Finland, and even stayed there during the civil war that followed Finland’s independence in 1917. In his autobiography, he concludes: ‘I was attached to Finland [...], and from the first moment I had experienced the most understanding sympathy there’ (Ahlbom 1919, 167).

Karin Swanström’s return to the Swedish stage was a fiasco, with brutal and frank criticism of her acting style. Contrary to Ahlbom, there is no suggestion that her pronunciation had been affected by her long stay in Finland. The critics focused more on her acting style that had been successful in Finland but was seen as outrageous and blunt in Stockholm. The premiere of Edvard Brandes’ *Primadonna* was postponed for several weeks because she was not feeling well. The critics described her performance as unnatural. They felt that she misinterpreted the text, placing emphasis in all the wrong places. They were also disturbed by her claque in the audience and all the bouquets she was given. In an interview, Ranft accused Swanström of buying tickets for her claque and paying for the flowers. Swanström responded in an open letter in one of the leading newspapers, calling Ranft a liar and accusing him of saddling her with a role that did not suit her. In an article in the Finland-Swedish newspaper *Hufvudstadsbladet*, the Stockholm correspondent Alenius tried to uncover the reasons for Karin Swanström’s fiasco in Stockholm. He wrote that her female colleagues took part in a mud-slinging campaign against her. He also criticized Ranft’s behaviour and the extremely harsh reviews written by the Swedish critics, but he admitted that Swanström had received too little criticism in Finland. Having experienced virtually no true competition in Finland, she had not felt any pressure to develop her artistry (Alenius 1903). It is not clear why Ranft had her perform in a role not suited to her acting style. That Swanström postponed her re-entry to the Swedish stage several times is evidence of her own uncertainty in this situation. It is probable that she was not actively enough engaged in monitoring the development at the theatres in Stockholm when the differences between the theatres of the two countries widened. Nevertheless, she

stayed in Sweden<sup>6</sup> and went on tour with her own theatre company from 1904 to 1920, receiving good reviews as both director and actress. Her screen debut in 1921 in a film by Mauritz Stiller, one of the actors with whom she had toured, was successful. In 1933, she was appointed artistic leader of the largest Swedish film company and directed four films herself.

As observed through the experiences of Ahlbom and Swanström, remigration can present challenges: the cultural climate, theatre development, and language evolution in Sweden and Finland took different paths during their time on stage, so when both of the actors returned to their home country, they noticed these differences. A study by John S. Lindberg reveals that many Swedish emigrants who remigrated to Sweden were similarly disillusioned (Lindberg 1930, 254). Both actors faced criticism in Sweden for being perceived as too Finnish and not meeting the expectations set for Swedish actors.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite a period of rising nationalism and aspirations of independence in Finland at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, Scandinavia was characterized by a transnational character, which, as I have shown through the professional biographies of Ernst Ahlbom and Karin Swanström, offered Swedish actors many opportunities to work in Finland. While most Swedish actors tended to stay in the country for just a short time, as the theatre there was seen as a good opportunity to try out a number of different roles and genres, these two actors stayed in Finland for longer. This was especially true of Ahlbom, who returned to his homeland only briefly but finally chose to stay in Finland in the long term, where he even became one of the leading forces in the acceptance of Finland-Swedish as a stage language. For despite its transnational character and its advantages, theatre in Scandinavia was also an important instrument for promoting nation-building and the construction of national imaginaries, and in this context, the question of stage language played an important role in Finland, especially in the capital Helsinki. Thus, native Swedish actors were engaged to ‘purify’ the Swedish language on Finland’s stages and help gain acceptance for bilingual theatres. On the other hand,

<sup>6</sup> Swanström never returned to The Swedish Theatre in Helsinki. The archive contains two of her letters, from 1904 and 1907. In the first she proposes a guest period with the company, in the second she complains that she never got a reply.

as the example of Swanström's remigration shows, the possibilities for Swedish performers in Finland were extensive, yet they also carried the risk of the actors becoming disconnected from theatrical norms in Sweden.

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# Agents of the State? Migration Networks of Theatre Practitioners in Galicia and Banat

*Jorit Jens Hopp*

Guest performances, tours, sudden changes of lease—the lives of theatre professionals in the Habsburg Empire were shaped by a variety of events that required a high degree of mobility. While in recent years studies have been presented on the work-related mobility and migration of other mobile working groups, such as journeymen and officers, within the Habsburg Empire (see Steidl 2003; see Scheer 2020), there has been almost no research on the specific labour migration of theatre practitioners. The labour migration of theatre professionals is a particularly interesting case, as it seems to be strongly influenced by state interventions in the theatre field, without being directly controlled on the individual level by state officials, as, for example, the labour migration of army officers was.

This article argues that network research methods are an important new tool to better understand the (labour) migration of theatre professionals and their complex life in general. Using the migration of theatre artists in the age of Austrian neo-absolutism as an example, I will show

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how these methods can help to test assumptions about the influence of state intervention and cultural policies on the labour migration of actors, actresses and directors.

To this end, I will first discuss why I believe that network research methods can be a productive intervention in the fields of theatre history and historical migration studies, despite some problems in their application. I will then introduce three hypotheses about the structure of the labour migration of theatre professionals in the years between 1848 and 1859, which I will analyse using network research methods. This analysis is based on data from the Imperial and Royal Private Count Skarbeck Theatre in Lviv, the City Theatre and the associated Arena in Timisoara, and the German stage of the Estates Theatre in Prague.

### HISTORICAL NETWORK ANALYSIS AS METHODOLOGY FOR HISTORICAL THEATRE MIGRATION RESEARCH

Situated between migration studies and theatre historiography, research on the historical migration of theatre practitioners finds itself in a border region in terms of both the subject of study and methodology. Interested both in the general structures and patterns that influence the migration of groups of people, and in the often complex and non-conforming lives of theatre practitioners, it is forced to address questions of macro- and micro-history, the history of individuals and groups, and quantitative and qualitative methods. I would argue that network research methods can function as both a link between and a foil for both sides. They are still biased like any other method. As Claire Lemerrier posits, they assume that the relationships between people, places or institutions are as important as or more important than the people, places or institutions themselves (2012, 20). Despite this, they are generally compatible with very different theories from the field of historical and social sciences, since ‘there really is no way to remain faithful to the fundamental insights of sociology without paying attention to networks of social relationships’ (1990, 15), as Mark Granovetter argues.

Since the end of the 2000s, social network research methods have been increasingly used in various areas of historical research. In the field of economic history, Eberhard Crailsheim posits that they ‘enable[s] a multi-polar approach to an historical economic setting, which has many advantages over traditional perspectives [...]’ (2020, 85). They are also

widely used in research on transnational political actions. As Marisa von Bülow has shown in her book on civil society networks and trade policy in North and South America, network research methods can bridge the gap between constructivist and structuralist approaches when the agency of actors in creating and terminating relationships is included in the analysis (2010, 7–9). Network research methods are generally considered by many authors as a good approach to reconcile macro- and micro-analysis (Lemercier 2012, 19–20; see Lazega 2003; see Jan Fuhse 2009). I would make a similar argument for research focused on the migration of theatre professionals. I think that the combination of a relational perspective, which forces us to overcome micro-macro-oppositions, and the compatibility with many theoretical paradigms, makes the use of network analysis methods a fruitful venture. On the one hand, the focus on networks makes it possible to describe the macrostructures of migration not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. This is particularly important because in the case of theatre practitioners, unlike, for example, craftsmen and officers, there are only a few state sources available that allow their migration paths to be traced almost in their entirety. It is therefore highly questionable whether it is even possible to generate the kind of rigid database required for quantitative methods based on descriptive and inductive statistics. At the micro-level, on the other hand, the relational view forces us to abandon the paradigm of ‘great men history’ (Carlyle 1841; cf. Ogburn 1926). However, I would also see it as a productive intervention in the modern paradigm of microhistory as developed by Carlo Ginzburg and Giovanni Levi (see Ginzburg 1993). Thus, Lemercier suggests that methods of formal network analysis can be used to quantitatively test insights into the interplay of personal relationships and social categories such as origin, class, gender and religion, as obtained in the pioneering studies of microhistory (2012, 18). In my opinion, this is the greatest advantage. Modelling historical contexts in the form of networks creates what Paul Feyerabend called a ‘dream world’ (1976, 37) that allows us to look at knowledge gained by other methods in a new way. For this reason, I would argue that the application of network research methods is useful even if their application in the context of historical theatre migration research poses some problems: in order to use network research methods, the complexity of historical lives and relationships must be reduced to neat categories and be abstracted to the level of mathematical graphs. Through such a reduction we risk losing precisely what is special about our objects of study. Another danger is that the level of abstraction gives the bias inscribed in the

historical sources the appearance of an ‘objective’ reality and thus falls back into a historiography stuck in hegemonial structures. I think most of the problems can be avoided if we clearly state what we are doing. When we work with network research methods, we are always working with a specific model that was created by and for a specific group of researchers at a specific time and for a specific reason (see Stachowiak 1973, 132–133). As such, the object of our research is not the historical reality, and the knowledge we gain from the research only a possibility, tainted by the bias of the source material, the way we extract data or ‘capta’ (Drucker 2011, 3) from it, and the modelling choices to which we submit the data. It is precisely this explicit constructedness of the method, I would argue, that helps us to understand the findings obtained with this and other methods as products of a specific research process rather than as objective truths.

### TESTING HYPOTHESES GAINED THROUGH QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

As I have argued, I see one of the biggest advantages of working with methods from network analysis in the possibility to test assumptions gained using other qualitative methods of historical research. Thus, in the following, I will present three hypotheses developed using a more classic close-reading approach. The focus here is on the Austrian Empire between 1848 and 1859. I have paid particular attention to the centralisation measures under Alexander von Bach and the cultural change that accompanied the expansion of the civil service.

Hypothesis 1: Labour migration towards theatres directly managed by theatre practitioners happens more often in groups.

The first hypothesis is based on more general considerations regarding the migration of theatre professionals rather than on the specific historical context of the years 1848–1859. For the phenomenon of theatre migration, a change of theatre director at a particular theatre is a frequent and reoccurring event. This has an impact not only on the director himself, but also on the ensemble members. In addition, it seems reasonable to assume that even if theatre directors do not take their entire ensembles with them, they still frequently hire people with whom they have already worked. Over time, this creates pools of actors and actresses who are frequently hired together due to their previous work biographies.

In the case of theatres run by people from outside the theatrical field, it might be expected that, unless they were to hire entire ensembles, they

would be less likely to use such groups of actors that have grown together over time.

Since the theatre landscape in the Eastern crown lands at the time of neo-absolutism was characterised by a mixture of different forms of theatre organisations, an investigation of this hypothesis seems appropriate despite its more general premises.

Hypothesis 2: Cultural developments strengthened the labour migration of German-speaking theatre professionals to crown lands in the East of the Empire.

The creation of a standardised bureaucracy and the centralisation of administration in the era of neo-absolutism created a new audience for German-language theatre in the Eastern crown lands. As part of these massive reforms, newly recruited civil servants, who were ideally well-groomed, uniformed and morally spotless, were to bring Vienna to the remote provinces and serve as role models for the local population (Heindl 2013, 54–59; Deak 2015, 125–128). Often with a tertiary education and as part of the new middle class, these state officials brought with them a demand for theatrical and musical entertainment. Although many of them did not come from a German-speaking background, they were all required to speak German as the primary language of the administration and thus represented an audience for German-speaking theatre. As they often originated from the crown lands within the German Confederation, the local populations in Hungary, Galicia or Banat often scorned them as ‘Germans’ regardless of their linguistic background and their knowledge of the local languages (Judson 2016, 223–225). Contemporary national activists viewed them as part of an occupying force.

Moreover, while there were few explicit attempts to replace non-German culture<sup>1</sup> with German culture, there were general cultural developments that favoured the spread of German-speaking culture into areas of the Empire that were not classically predominantly German-speaking. The reintroduction of strict censorship, for example, partly prevented the performance of newly emerging Czech, Polish or Magyar plays that addressed contemporary events or past events that could be interpreted in a nationalistic sense. German-language publications containing such material were also banned by the censors (see Bachleitner 2010, 92–99), but the censorship, even if applied equally, would undoubtedly have harmed

<sup>1</sup>The concept of a German nationality and/or culture inside the Austrian Empire is complex. It would be more precise to speak of culture produced using the German language.

the unestablished non-German cultural institutions more. While primary education was offered in the vernacular languages of the various regions, the language of secondary education was still German. In light of these wider cultural developments and the migration of an educated German-speaking civil servant class to the Eastern Crown Lands, it seems reasonable to assume that there was an increased demand for German-speaking theatre professionals.

Hypothesis 3: State-run theatres recruit their artistic staff from a wider geographical area.

While there were certain tendencies towards Germanisation within the Austrian Empire, especially among its civil servants, the official line of the government in Vienna guaranteed equal rights for the different languages and ethnic groups in the Empire. Studies such as the *Ethnographie der österreichischen Monarchie* by Karl von Czörnig, head of the office of administrative statistics, paint a picture of Austria as a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic state (1857, v).

In general, we can discern a trend towards a multi-ethnic Austrian national identity, towards an ‘Austrianness’ (Komsloy 2015, 370) that should not only be seen as a concession to non-German-speaking population groups. It was also a safety net against German nationalist aspirations that would accept the subordination of the Austrian Empire, given the increased disputes over sovereignty with Prussia in the German Confederation. Rooted in a connection to the emperor residing in Vienna and the empire-wide institutions which communicated in German, this Austrianness was still easier to adopt for German-speaking people (Komsloy 2015, 378–383). If the theatres run directly by the state supported the central government’s line of a supra-regional Austrianness, it can be assumed that even in the case of purely German-language theatres they would try to weaken nationalist aspirations within the ensemble and the audience, which had already caused problems in the period before the revolutions of 1848/1849. It is likely that they followed considerations like those of the later Austro-Hungarian military leadership (see Scheer 2020, 79–80) and preferred ethnically mixed ensembles.

### THE DATA SET: SOURCES AND PROCEDURES

In order to test these three hypotheses using historical network methods, it is necessary, in my opinion, to create a data set in which theatres from the Eastern crown lands and from the imperial centre are represented

(Hypothesis 2). It is also necessary to include at least one state theatre and one private theatre (Hypothesis 3). In addition, I decided to include a theatre from the third most common form of organisation, a theatre under aristocratic management. In the end, I chose the Imperial and Royal Private Count Skarbeck's Theatre in Lviv, the City Theatre and the associated Arena in Timisoara, and the German stage of the Estates Theatre in Prague. As well as covering all the important categories, these theatres all underwent major changes in management in approximately the same period, which should compensate for some of the differences between a well-established house and a theatre start-up.

The starting point for the data set was the ensemble lists in the *Almanach für Freunde der Schauspielkunst* (Volumes 12–17, 1848–1853), as well as the *Deutscher Bühnenalmanach* (Volumes 18–23, 1854–1859). In addition, excerpts from the Paul S. Ulrich Almanac and Journal database were used.<sup>2</sup> For the creation of the data set on the theatre in Lviv, the index in the excellent two-volume *Das Österreichische Theater in Lemberg im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* by Jerzy Got also proved to be very helpful. Based on these, the *Grosses Biographisches Lexikon der deutschen Bühne im 19. Jahrhundert* by Ludwig Eisenberg, the *Deutsches Theater Lexikon* by Wilhelm Kosch, the *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon*, the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, the *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Österreich*, and, to a lesser extent, issues of the *Wiener Allgemeine Theaterzeitung* from 1852 to 1856 were used to identify ensemble members as clearly as possible and to determine their last place of employment before they moved to one of the theatres studied. This resulted in a data set of 124 persons (29 in Lviv, 39 in Timisoara, and 56 in Prague) whose last place of employment before a transfer or, in some cases a contract renewal, could be determined. The uneven distribution of the data across the three different theatres limits the validity of some quantitative analysis methods but does not pose a serious obstacle to a qualitative exploration of the data.

The data for the theatre in Lviv cover the period between 1852 and 1855, when the civil servant Johann Phillip ran the theatre. For Timisoara, I have concentrated on the years of the first lease of the theatre by the entrepreneur Friedrich Strampfer. The Prague set includes data from 1852 to 1858. During this period, the theatre entrepreneur August Stöger worked under the artistic direction of Wenzel Ritter von Bergenthal, who had the real decision-making power.

<sup>2</sup> At the time of writing, the database was not yet publicly accessible in digital form.



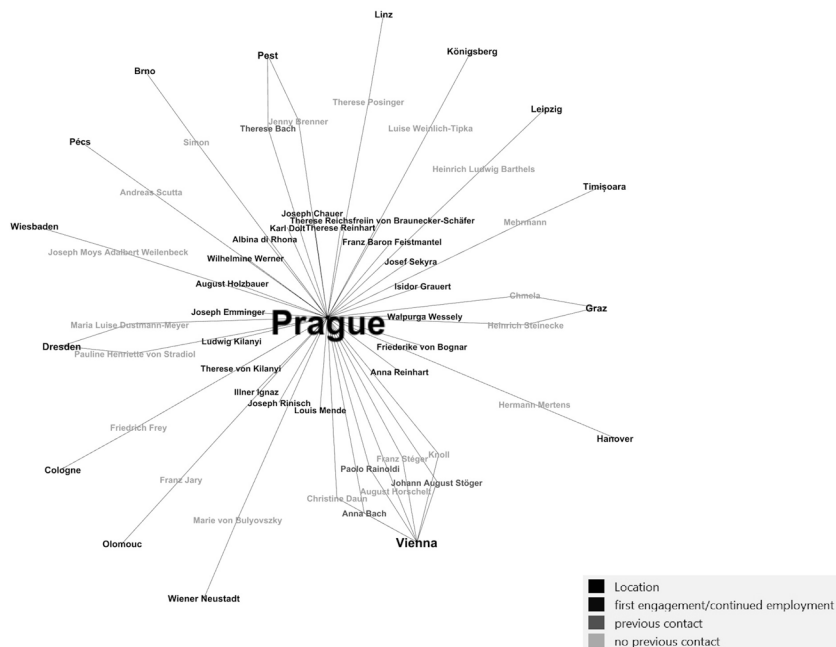
*Data Exploration 1: Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2*

Hypothesis 1 states that labour migration to theatres directly managed by theatre practitioners happens more often in groups, since it seems likely that theatre directors recruit staff from theatre professionals they already know, even if they do not take their whole company with them when they move. Applying this to the three theatres under consideration here, it is likely that Strampfer in Timisoara, who already had years of theatre experience and full control over the staff recruitment, drew more heavily on a pool of acquaintances than Varry in Lviv, who had to follow the staffing wishes of the civil servant Johann Phillip, or Wenzel Ritter von Bergenthal, the aristocratic artistic director in Prague.

Hypothesis 2 states that cultural developments favour the labour migration of German-speaking theatre professionals to the crown lands in the East of the ‘imperial core’ (Komsloy 2015, 372–375). If the theatres in the eastern crown lands started to become preferred locations for German-speaking theatre practitioners, one would expect the ratio of newly arriving to remaining theatre members to be higher in Lviv and Timisoara than in Prague.

Both hypotheses can be explored through the visual analysis of the data in a network form. To do this, I have converted the data into a bipartite graph. In this network, the ensemble members are connected as nodes by edges to Prague, Lviv or Timisoara as their destination as well as to the city of their last employment. In addition, the actors are coloured accordingly if they had already worked at the observed theatre or had already worked with one of the directors before the beginning of the period (Figs. 1–3).

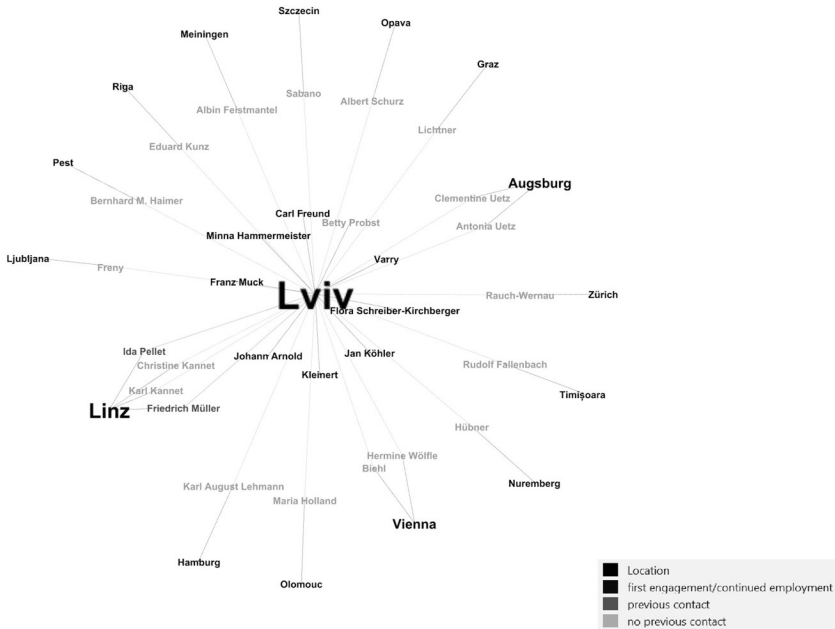
For the three theatres in Lviv, Prague and Timisoara, Hypothesis 2 seems somewhat true. While in Prague nearly 50% of the staff had already worked in Prague before the change of management, only 30% of the ensemble in the more Eastern Lviv and almost the entire staff in Timisoara changed with Strampfer. This raises the question of whether some of these differences could be explained by the different organisational forms of the theatres. In Prague, the hiring of staff was in the hands of the artistic manager Wenzel Ritter von Bergenthal, who had held his post since 1850. This may explain some of the strong continuity in the ensemble. According to Jerzy Got’s research on the Austrian theatre in Lviv, the major changes in the city theatre could also be due to conflicts between the strict theatre managers and some ‘free-spirited’ artists, as well as to a lack of artistic understanding on the part of the adjuncts (1997, 546–548, 558–562). Even if it is partly explained by other factors, the difference in the rate of



**Fig. 1** Prague 1852–1858, ensemble and previous employment, label size ranked by out-degree, created by Jorit Hopp with Gephi 0.10

remaining artists between the Estates Theatre in Prague, and thus the imperial core, and the theatres in Galicia and Banat is striking (Figs. 1–3).

This could also be an explanation for the small number of ensemble members who had previously worked with the director Stöger, which could also be explained by the overpowering position of Johann Phillip. It is striking how much higher the proportion of newcomers from different cities seems to be among the stage personnel. Less than 30% of the members recorded between 1852 and 1854 were already employed in Lviv before Pellet’s departure. This could be an indication that, after the end of the revolutions of 1848/1849 and with the increase in German-speaking officials, the eastern territories were favoured by theatre professionals looking for work.



**Fig. 2** Lviv 1852–1854, ensemble and previous employment, label size ranked by out-degree, created by Jorit Hopp with Gephi 0.10

The visualisations for Prague and Lviv also fit Hypothesis 2. Both theatres are not managed by theatre professionals, and in both cases few staff had already collaborated with the directors before. But Timisoara breaks with this hypothesis in a shocking way. According to the data, almost none of the ensemble members had worked with Strampfer before. This not only contradicts the thesis that theatre makers prefer to recruit from a pool of people they already know, but also seems somewhat dubious in the light of the sparse secondary literature that reports that Strampfer came to Timisoara with a full company (Schütz 1944, 84). This could be a case of a distortion of the historical facts, due to the incomplete source material and the limitations necessary for this research. When referring to the *Almanach für Freunde der Schauspielkunst* (Volume 17, 1853), which describes the first ensemble under Strampfer, it is noticeable that none of



### *Data Exploration 2: Hypothesis 3*

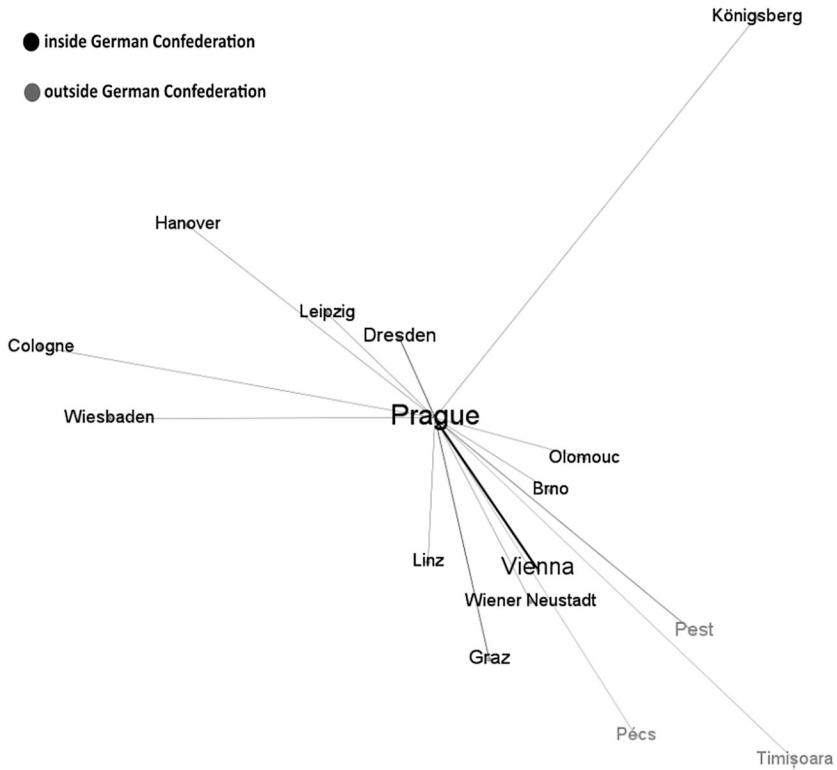
Hypothesis 3 is less about the relationships between the human actors in the bipartite networks and more about the relationship between the places: it is not who came to whom, but rather the points of departure and arrival that are of interest here. First conclusions can already be drawn from the three visualisations so far. In the case of the Estates Theatre in Prague, apart from Prague itself, only Vienna stands out as the major supplier of new stage personnel. Along with Vienna, Prague was one of the cultural strongholds of the Austrian Empire. A strong exchange between the two cities seems logical. Although the Provincial Committee of the Bohemian Estates cut subsidies at the beginning of Stöger's lease period, which according to Markéta Bartos Tautrmanová could be interpreted as a departure from the concept of the Estates Theatre as an educational and representative theatre (2012, 36–38, 62), the management by a German-speaking aristocrat probably further strengthened the connection between Prague and Vienna. In the case of Lviv, only Linz, Vienna and Augsburg appear more than once in the data. However, with only two actors or actresses moving from each of Vienna and Augsburg to Lviv, their significance may well be coincidental due to the limited data. The weak connection to Vienna is striking. The region of Galicia was one of the economic losers of the 1850s and a peripheral crown land in contemporary conception (see Maner 2003, 153–164), but the theatre in Lviv was still one of the largest provincial theatres in the empire. One explanation may be the lack of a personal connection to the cultural circles in Vienna, which both the Estates Theatre in Prague and the City Theatre in Timisoara possessed. The strong connection between Linz and Lviv could be a consequence of the work of Joseph Pellet, who retired from his post as theatre director in 1852. He had directed the Estates Theatre in Linz before coming to Lviv. Among the actors recruited to Linz in the meantime was his daughter Ida Pellet.

Wiener Neustadt is the most important poaching point for Timisoara. In general, however, it is noticeable that Timisoara, unlike Lviv and Prague, seems to have a wider network, even reaching as far as Amsterdam. This is interesting, as I have argued in Hypothesis 3 that a state-run theatre, if it is to follow the imperial trend of an Austrian identity, should have a wider geographical area from which to recruit. One reason for this wider distribution may have been Strampfer's years of touring, which took him not to Amsterdam but through large parts of Austria and

Hungary. In general, Strampfer seems to have had a well-established network, as evidenced by the considerable number of high-profile guest performers he was able to recruit for Timisoara (Boisits 2017) and to have possessed an exceptional artistic, if not entrepreneurial, talent (Eisenberg 1903, 1009). However, with the exception of Vienna, which Strampfer knew from his time as an actor at the Hofburg Theatre, he hardly seems to have been able to attract actors from the cultural metropolises of his time for permanent engagements. It may be that the improved networking of theatre practitioners had such a strong impact on the geographical scope of the recruitment area that it more than negated any unspoken policy of multi-ethnic ensembles, if such a policy really existed.

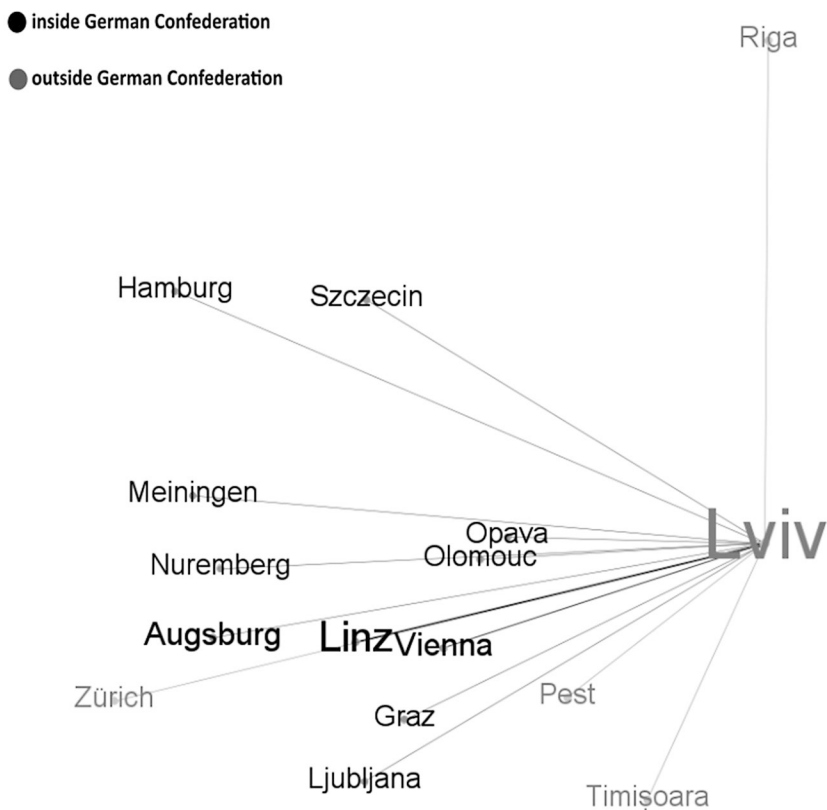
The aspect of the spatiality of places, the distance between them and thus the effort of travelling, has hardly been included in the analysis so far. In order to take it into account and to focus solely on the cities, the bipartite graphs were projected onto monopartite ones. Instead of theatre actors and localities, only cities appear in this graph. The edges connecting them represent the flow of ensemble members towards the target theatre. The thickness of the connecting arrow represents the number of ensemble members. Unlike the previous visualisations, here I used a geo-layout algorithm, which orders the nodes not according to the properties of the network structure, but according to the longitude and latitude of the cities. I have taken the coordinates from *Geonames*. In the following figures, the relative position of the nodes to each other corresponds to that of the localities. For Hypothesis 3, I was interested in whether theatre ensemble members came from regions within the German Confederation, so the city names were coloured accordingly (Figs. 4 and 5).

At first glance, the stages in Lviv and Timisoara show a strong westward orientation. As German-speaking stages are located east of the largest German-speaking conurbations, this was to be expected. Nevertheless, it is striking that the data for Lviv does not include a single engagement from a theatre located further east. This argues against a conscious effort to combat nationalist tendencies in the audience and the ensemble through a multi-ethnic approach to recruitment. Got also reports in this context a conscious reduction of Polish-speaking theatre in 1853, which could even indicate a (German) nationalist approach that further favoured theatre professionals from theatres within the German Confederation (1997, 549). In that case, the theatre practice in Lviv under Phillip would work



**Fig. 4** Prague 1852–1858, previous employment geo-located, created by Jorit Hopp with Gephi 0.10

against the official stance of the Viennese government. It also becomes clear once again that the Hungarian theatres did not play a role as recruitment centres for Lviv. The absence of Prague also seems conspicuous, especially as both Opava and Olomouc in neighbouring Moravia appear in the data. This reinforces the impression that there were hardly any relations between Lviv and the major Habsburg theatres. Instead, Phillip drew his non-resident personnel mainly from smaller theatres in the two Austrian states and, above all, from smaller and larger theatres in the rest of the German Confederation. In the case of both Prague and Lviv, no

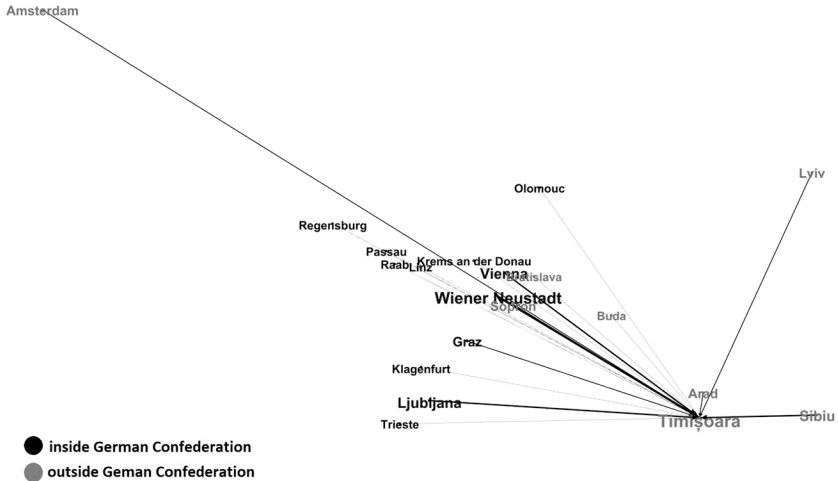


**Fig. 5** Lviv 1852–1854, previous employment geo-located, created by Jorit Hopp with Gephi 0.10

other theatres from their own crown lands appear and there are no clusters of places from which they drew personnel.

The situation is different in Timișoara, where actors from Arad, also located in Banat, are employed. In contrast to Lviv, Strampfer also employed theatre professionals from other provincial theatres further east. Buda, Sopron and Bratislava form such a cluster in the west of Hungary. Figure 6 also shows a dense concentration of cities (Vienna, Bratislava, Sopron, Krems, Linz, Passau, Raab). If there is no obvious reason for this concentration in the data itself, it could again be a matter of contacts that





**Fig. 6** Timisoara 1852–1858, previous employment geo-located, created by Jorit Hopp with Gephi 0.10

Strampfer collected during his years of travelling. They would correspond to a route from Germany through Austria and then Hungary, as suggested by various biographical encyclopaedia entries (Eisenberg 1903, 1008; von Wurzbach 1879, 232; Bigler-Marschall 1998, 2381; Fastl 2009, 354). Unfortunately, the entries in the almanacs are again not particularly helpful in verifying these claims. What is certain, however, is that the people who came to Timisoara from this area were not part of Strampfer's original travelling company.

Given the strong connection between Timisoara and other provincial theatres in the Eastern parts of the empire, it is all the more surprising that there are hardly any connections between Lviv and other provincial theatres in the crown lands outside the German Confederation. This is also illustrated by the figures in Table 1. Of those employed in Timisoara and not originally employed there 18% come from crown lands outside the German Confederation, but this was the case for only 12% of those employed in Lviv. In the case of Timisoara and Lviv, Hypothesis 3 and its underlying premises seem to be clearly untrue. It would be interesting to see whether this is a special case or whether there really is a different trend.

**Table 1** Previous employment grouped by crown land, by Jorit Hopp

<i>Previous employment Timisoara</i>		<i>Previous employment Lviv</i>		<i>Previous employment Prague</i>	
Banat	20%	Galicia	31%	Bohemia	44%
Lower Austria	20%	German Confederation (not including Austria)	21%	Lower Austria	19%
Hungary	10%	Upper Austria	14%	German Confederation (not including Austria)	16%
Carniola	8%	Lower Austria	7%	Hungary	7%
Transylvania	8%	Banat	3%	Moravia	5%
Galicia	5%	Carniola	3%	Banat	2%
German Confederation (not including Austria)	5%	Hungary	3%	Styria	2%
Kingdom of Netherlands	5%	Moravia	3%	Upper Austria	2%
Styria	5%	Russian Empire	3%		
Upper Austria	5%	Silesia	3%		
Carinthia	2%	Styria	3%		
Triest	2%	Swiss Confederation	3%		
Moravia	2%				

One possible trend could be that state-run theatres more often have some German-nationalist tendencies. Another explanation could be the more commercial orientation of privately run theatres. Depending on the public taste, privately run theatres recruited from theatres in similar circumstances and try to incorporate local favourites, while theatres run by the state or aristocrats, which often also saw themselves as institutions for education, recruited increasingly from theatres in the German-speaking conurbations.

## CONCLUSION

The labour migration of theatre professionals, with their often-colourful biographies and non-conformist lifestyles, cannot be sufficiently researched with the established tools of migration research and theatre historiography, and traditional quantitative methods for the analysis of migration

structures often require a fairly homogenous and comprehensive data set in order to function properly. In the case of theatre practitioners, such a data set is only possible for special cases or small geographical regions. Furthermore, these methods run the risk of levelling out the differences that make the lives of theatre practitioners so interesting for research. I would also argue that even the modern paradigm of microhistory, with its dense, qualitative descriptions, only paints an incomplete picture that would benefit from a re-examination of its findings using quantitative methods. In this paper, I have shown that network research methods can be one way to fill this methodological gap. Taking the labour migration of German-speaking theatre professionals between 1848 and 1859 as an example, I showed how these methods can be used to test hypotheses about the specific structure of this labour migration. The analysis demonstrated that it is possible to achieve interesting results even with limited data.

The comparative analysis of theatres in Prague, Lviv and Timisoara confirms the hypothesis that cultural developments in the era of neo-absolutism increased the labour migration of theatre professionals to eastern crown lands such as Galicia and Banat. While the imperial government sought to establish a multi-ethnic Austrianness, in contrast to German and non-German nationalist efforts, the state-run theatre in Lviv recruited nearly exclusively from theatres inside the German confederation. This may be a sign of broader nationalist tendencies inside the state-run cultural sector which ran contrary to the official state line of equality between different languages and ethnic groups.

Even more striking to me is the fact that there was no discernible difference between the theatres run by theatre entrepreneurs and those run by state officials or aristocrats in terms of the employment of staff previously known to the directors. It seems very counterintuitive that the theatre director Friedrich Strampfer recruited hardly any actors or actresses that had worked with him before. It seems likely that this is just a special case for Strampfer, or a relic of the source material used. Nevertheless, the possibility pointed out by Lemerrier of obtaining results that contradict one of the basic assumptions of the method itself (2012, 22), in this case the influence of social networks on the migration of theatre professionals, represents another strength of using network research methods as a tool for critically examining our assumptions.

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PART IV

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Migration Trajectories and  
Transnational Lifeworlds





# From Barcelona to Buenos Aires [and Beyond]: The Millanes Sisters as Migrant Performers, 1880–1920

*Kristen McCleary*

At four pm on August 4, 1906, the *Sirio*, an Italian passenger ship headed for South America, crashed into a reef as the ship captain maneuvered a shortcut through the Hormigas Islands off the coast of Cartagena, Spain. Dolores ‘Lola’ Millanes Borre (b. Barcelona, Spain, 1859–1906)<sup>1</sup> a well-known theatre performer from Spain, was among the more than 200 passengers and crew who drowned that day out of 900 on board (Jáuregui-Lobera 2020, 1246). Lola’s death reminds us of the inherent dangers of transatlantic migration, one of numerous risks that performers and immigrants alike confronted as they embarked for new shores.

In this chapter, I explore the careers and migrations of the most well-known of the six Millanes sisters, Lola, and her younger sister, Carlota

<sup>1</sup>I put in birth and death dates and locations when the information is available.

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(b. Barcelona 1865–d. Madrid 1924).<sup>2</sup> Once stars of Spanish popular theatre, the two are little remembered today, a trait they share with most nineteenth-century touring actresses (Norwood 2020, 1). Lola and Carlota proved to be intrepid migrants who moved throughout Spain's provinces, and crisscrossed the Atlantic venturing throughout the Americas during an era when travel was time-consuming, difficult, and inherently risky, as the opening anecdote exemplifies. The Millanes sisters often moved as a flexible unit, with at least two sisters touring together at most times. In Spain, most women might be expected to marry, raise children, and manage the domestic sphere—in one fixed location. By definition, then, the movement required to be a touring actress in the 1880s–1920s, meant that the Millanes sisters were transgressing the gender roles of their era. Tracy C. Davis' reminds us in her study of actresses how intermingled work and family life were for actresses: 'I do not see how actresses' professional and personal lives can be separated; they are integrated components and must be recognized as such in the writing of history' (Davis 1991, xi).

This chapter draws from a wide variety of newspaper and magazine articles as well as playscripts to piece together how mobility shaped the lives of actresses and to surmise how their performances and mobility expanded contemporary understandings of women's roles in society. News articles trace the movements and receptions of the actresses' work while playscripts provide a fuller picture of the representations that they transmitted. If on the one hand, their lives on the move and their performances of diverse characters expanded conceptions of woman's roles in society, the sisters also operated within and were privileged by an imperial system of race and ethnicity that placed whiteness at the apex of a racial hierarchy. Their lives reveal the complex and contradictory ways in which forces of mobility, colonialism, nationalism, gender, and, in the case of Carlota, motherhood, intersected in the Americas (Fig. 1).

<sup>2</sup>The marital union of María Allue, a stage performer from the Aragon region of north-eastern Spain, and Pedro Millanes, from neighboring Catalonia, produced seven children, five of who were performers. Two sisters, in particular, María (1861–1925, married name Pacello) and Teresa (1867–1933, married name Saavedra), often performed alongside of Lola and Carlota. Over time, the family networks grew to include spouses, children, nieces, and nephews. Lola was briefly married. The Argentine census of 1895 listed her as a widow. Many sources refer to her as having a daughter, Emilia Jordan Millanes. However, on Emilia Jordan Millanes' death certificate she is identified as a widow of Joaquin Coss and her mother is listed as María Millanes, not Dolores (Death Certificate, Federal District, Mexico, Civil Registration Deaths, September 16, 1957, p. 341).



**Fig. 1** Lola Millanes and Antonio Ferrándiz on horseback in the entrance of the Bullfighting Plaza in Valencia, Spain. Photographer: García Antonio, circa 1898, Biblioteca Valenciana

Born into a family of performers, the sisters began their artistic studies under the direction of the composer, Francesco Pérez y Cabrero (1847–1913) in Barcelona. Lola first performed as part of a chorus in 1880. For ten years, she made a living in theatre in Valencia, Spain ('Dolores Millanes,' 1900). In 1886, the Spanish composer, Avelino Aguirre (1838–1901) contracted Lola to work with his acting company at the Teatro Nacional in Buenos Aires. Carlota traveled to Buenos Aires two years later (Bosch 1910, 444). She married a theatre empresario and musician, Manuel Caballé (b. Spain 1859–), and they had three children: María Caballé Millanes (b. Buenos Aires, 1890–d. Spain, 1976), Carlos Caballé Millanes (b. Valparaiso, Chile 1892–d. Mexico, 1954), and Emilia Caballé Millanes (b. Buenos Aires 1894–d. Spain, 1979). Having children while working abroad is certainly one way we can see how actresses' personal and professional lives were intertwined. Carlota's son, Carlos, for example, was born in April 1892, while Carlota was on tour in Chile. Being

**Fig. 2** Carlota Millanes in Colombia. This is a photo of Carlota portraying Angelita from the zarzuela *Chateaux Margot*, January 10, 1908, Wikimedia Commons



pregnant and then mother of a newborn did not seem to stop her working for long ('Desde Chile,' 1892, 3) (Fig. 2).

Of the family of performers, Lola was the closest to being an actual 'star' of the theatre circuit. Her career trajectory largely corresponds to that of the Spanish popular theatre genre known as the zarzuela, a form of light opera originating in Spain which had both sung and spoken dialogue.<sup>3</sup> Argentine theatre historian, Mariano Bosch, refers to her as the 'second best' soprano to come to Buenos Aires in the latter part of the nineteenth century (1910, 419). Lola was not just a performer, however. In 1889, she is noted as being the head of an acting company in both Alicante, Spain (*Boletín oficial de la propiedad intelectual e industrial*

<sup>3</sup>I use the terms 'popular theater' and 'zarzuela' interchangeably for this article.

1889, 4–5) and in Buenos Aires, Argentina (‘Teatros en ultramar,’ 1890, 3). She showed her star power in other ways as well and is credited as being the first actress to break a work contract because the theatre manager did not comply with their part of it in Spain (‘Espectáculos,’ 1903, 3). The authors of the play, *El Mozo Crúo* [*The Cruel Waiter*] supported Lola in her decision, pulling it from the Teatro Cómico and opening it in the Teatro Zarzuela instead (Jiménez-Prieto and Pérez-Capo 1904.)

### SPANISH THEATRE AS NATIONAL EXPORT

Reaching its height of popularity while Spain was losing its final colonies in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam, Spanish popular theatre offers an intriguing example of what might be thought of as a form of ‘cultural imperialism’ but one which was propelled from ‘below,’ rather than as part of an imperialistic enterprise imposed from ‘above.’ Capitalism propelled theatre impresarios and performers abroad. In search of economic gain, they expanded Spain’s theatre industry across the Atlantic at a moment of Spanish imperial decline. The pervasiveness of Lola and Carlota’s travel was legendary. In a profile of Lola, for example, a magazine said that there was not a stage in the Americas she had not performed on (*Boletín Fonográfico* 1900, 1).

It was a legacy of Spanish colonization that Latin American audiences had developed their taste for Spanish musical theatre. Technological innovations in the mid to late nineteenth century facilitated transatlantic immigration: railway, steamships, and the telegraph. In addition, theatre in South America, at least, coincided with the off-season of theatre in Spain, and if acting companies were willing to travel, they could easily extend their work season. Two distinct theatre circuits formed in the Americas: The most well-defined one consisted of the link between Madrid, Spain, Havana, Cuba, and Mexico City. South America had its own trajectory with Buenos Aires being the base from which performers would begin before moving to provincial theatres throughout Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and often to the northern countries of South America, as well. The port city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil had long been a main stop for opera companies who toured South America (Rosselli 1990, 165). While the large cities were the main destination of zarzuela companies, recent scholarship attests to how pervasively zarzuela companies moved throughout Latin America (Bissell 1987; Herrera Atehortúa 2011; McCleary 2017; Sánchez 2010; Sturman 2000).

The zarzuela as a cultural export was made possible by the transformation and institutionalization of Spanish popular theatre as an industry in the mid-nineteenth century in Spain. The rise of urbanization and a concomitant demand for leisure time entertainment helped to transform the theatre of practice itself. Instead of four-hour performances, enterprising theatre practitioners wrote and staged short plays, ‘theatre by the hour’ which attracted a working-class audience who could afford to attend these plays which also coincided with an urban work schedule. These shorter theatre offerings flourished in Madrid where the output of popular composers such as Joaquín Gaztambide (1822–1870), Emilio Arrieta (1823–1894) and Francisco Asenjo Barbieri (1823–1894), helped fuel the one-act productions. By 1865, there were 296 theatres in Spain accommodating 150,800 spectators, and which offered 11,369 functions that year. The province of Madrid had 15 theatres, with seven of those in the city proper (Barreiro Sánchez 2009, 294).

Scholarship on Spanish popular theatre has, thus, focused on Madrid which was the historic center of the *género chico* (small genre theatre, referring to theatre by the hour; the zarzuela belongs under this umbrella term). In contrast, the Millanes family came from Barcelona, a city which was oriented more towards Italian and French choral traditions. The Millanes sisters reflect a melding of the worlds of classical training in Barcelona with the business model of Madrid’s popular theatre (Young 2016, 22–23). It is within this context, that the Millanes sisters might be understood as migrant workers. Theatre performers modulated their migrations with the seasons: In December through March, performers would focus on European theatres, and from May to August, they would work on the other side of the Atlantic. Eventually, they made Latin America their base of operations but always returned to Spain: Lola died enroute to Argentina from Spain and Carlota died in Madrid, returning after having lived many years in Mexico.

### SPANISH-ARGENTINE RELATIONS: COLLABORATIONS, CONTESTATIONS, AND THE GENDERED DYNAMICS OF ‘SOFT’ DIPLOMACY IN ARGENTINA, 1890S

Lola and Carlota performed in the Americas during a heightened era of nation-building and nationalism. Arturo Berenguer Carisomo, writing about the Spanish community in Argentina, identified theatre as being one of the main arenas that the Spanish ‘radiated’ its influence in Argentina

(2003, 52). Indeed, theatre was more than staged entertainment; it was the main space wherein national identities were constructed and displayed through serving as places to celebrate national holidays, perform national anthems, and for the public to fete foreign dignitaries. Being Spanish in the Americas was not a neutral condition, however, and actors were often thrust into political circumstances over which they had little control. In Argentina, for example, the national anthem had lyrics that were derogatory towards Spain, their former colonizer. It was customary for acting companies to sing these lyrics on special occasions. This meant that Spanish acting companies were asked to denigrate their own nation by singing the Argentine anthem. Resistance to this tradition provoked audience members, often resulting in physical skirmishes in theatres. (McCleary 2002, 13–14). Reminders about the colonial relationship between the nations frequently appeared in the press, due to Cuba's Wars of Independence (1895–1898) as well as the fact that the nineteenth century coincided with immense waves of Spanish emigration to Argentina where over 2,000,000 Spaniards entered the country between 1857 and 1930 (Moya 1998, 1).

In the 1890s, a few theatrical trends came together on national stages, reflective of the often-contradictory way in which nation-building occurred. First, plays served as a kind of cultural propaganda, constructing and representing notions of national identity, often by using metaphor to symbolize a nation's uniqueness. Second, national audiences increasingly demanded nuanced representations of their own gestures, accents, and regional types in the 1890s, no longer trusting that Spanish actors could adequately depict them. Three, there were also countervailing forces at play in theatre, with close collaborations between Argentine and Spanish playwrights occurring. Theatre practitioners from both of these countries viewed theatre as being an effective tool from which to pry open a relatively closed political systems towards a more democratic one and used theatre for the democratization of the public sphere.

Lola and Carlota, like many Spanish actors abroad, served as unofficial cultural diplomats working amidst a Spanish exile community, one which was closely engaged with the political life of both Spain and Argentina. In Buenos Aires, much of these collaborations centered around Emilio Onrubia, (b. Entre Rios, Argentina 1849–1907) and his theatre, the Teatro Onrubia, which had served as political rallying point during a rebellion against Argentina's oligarchic government in 1890. One of the most important and powerful Spanish immigrants in Buenos Aires, Justo

López de Gomara, a playwright and the director of the Spanish community newspaper, *El Correo Español*, also frequently staged his plays at the Onrubia (1890, 1). It was around this time that a genre of theatre known as the zarzuela criolla evolved in Buenos Aires, where Spanish and Argentine playwrights worked together to adapt Spanish plays to Argentine settings.

Three plays reflect this early connection of theatre and its construction of national identities. Spain's *El certamen nacional* (*The National Contest*) (Perrín and Palacios 1888), *La gran vía* (*The Great Thoroughfare*) (Chueca 1886) and Argentina's *De paseo en Buenos Aires*, (*Strolling Through Buenos Aires*) (López de Gomara 1889), an adaptation of *La gran vía*, to Buenos Aires. Lola had starring roles in at least two of the three plays. In each, actors personified national wealth and economic productivity by depicting a nation's economic output, especially crops, like sugar and coffee, which had historically been dependent upon the labor of enslaved people, especially in Spain's current colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico. For example, Lola played the part of the *mulatita* [a *mulata*, or young woman of mixed African and European heritage] who sang the song, 'tango del café,' in the *Certamen Nacional*. The *mulatita* character works on a coffee plantation, harvesting beans. In the opening verse, Pancho sidles up to her, flirtatiously asking if he can help with her work. She brushes him off but later agrees to a coffee with him. In the tango del café, the character sings: 'If you doubt that Puerto Rican coffee is the best, I will certify it for you. Anyone who wants to sample something good, should just come my way!' The song became so popular in Buenos Aires that the Café Paulista, a local venue, invoked Lola's name and the tango del café in an advertisement ('Cariño...no hay major café,' 1906, 60), substituting Café Paulista for Puerto Rico when quoting the song's lyrics.

In 1890, Justo López de Gomara adapts these lyrics to his own musical sketch comedy set in Buenos Aires, *De paseo en Buenos Aires*. He replaces coffee, with sugar, an actual Argentine export crop important to Tucumán, a province in the north. Lola plays the character *Morenita* [dark-skinned sweetheart]<sup>4</sup> who personifies brown sugar. The character draws from

<sup>4</sup>Morena is sometimes translated as 'brunette' in English but this inaccurately puts the focus on hair over skin color, which is not the meaning of 'Morena' in Spanish. Chasteen translates Morena as 'dark-skinned woman.' In this song, however, the diminutive 'ita' adds another dimension to the word, suggesting affection but through flirtation. In both plays, lyrics reinforce a sexualization of the woman of colour, the Morena, thus dark-skinned 'sweetheart,' 'sweety-pie,' or 'honey,' might all be more accurate translations of the word.



stereotypes about dark-skinned/mixed-race women in Latin America, who are depicted as overtly sexual and/or as sex objects (Chasteen 2004). Lola sings the following lyrics:

Gentlemen, I am brown sugar  
Sweeter than any that ever there was  
born from the radiant and beautiful  
land of Tucumán  
And although I am somewhat dark  
It's my superior 'class' ification  
That turns any man who samples me  
Into a glutton for more

Oh! Yes,  
Because my sweetness  
gives such great pleasure  
Once someone brings me to his lips  
He continues to lick them for at least a month after.

Morenita, Morenita!  
They always want to 'refine' me  
because I am so tasty  
The very best of Tucumán  
So any good-looking young man from Buenos Aires  
If he chooses me,  
He will have my sweetness  
For the rest of his life (López de Gomara 1889, 78)

Both of these songs draw from racist and sexist tropes of the era, evolving out of the Latin American colonial system which established whiteness as a 'racial' ideal. This explains why *Morenita's* dark skin color was positioned as a defect ('although I am somewhat dark'). Giving insight into the race, class and gender construction of the era, the playwright deftly explains that 'defect' might be ameliorated via class. The lyrics playfully make this connection through an emphasis on 'class' and 'classification,' with the former denoting social class and the latter identifying the quality of the product itself. *Morenita* also exemplifies a stereotypical schematic of the dark-skinned woman in Latin American narratives where she is both sexual temptress and sexual object—a powerful myth which covers up the reality of women of color as victims of outright rape at times and commonly in relationships which reflected the colonial hierarchy where white men had sexual relationships with women of color, reflecting great

differentials of power in the colonial system between the colonizer and the colonized (Wade 2015, 71–76).

Historian John Charles Chasteen explains the power of the myth of the Morena in Latin American narratives:

...by Morena I mean not a person but a lyrical motif, a motif that includes Negra or Mulata or Morocha or China or any other name amounting to Dark Woman. This Dark Woman is the American Eve because she stands at the center of the imagery of popular music and dance, prime representations [of] the region's foundational myth. When popular dance is put forward to symbolize the special genius of Latin America—attractively vital and spirited, a persuasive example of creative cultural hybridity—the dancer most easily imagined is, without question, the *Morena* [my emphasis]. (Chasteen 2004, 201)

Throughout their careers, the Millanes sisters and their daughters are asked to perform some rendition of the Morena archetype. This will include not only performances of mestiza/mulata/that is, of mixed-race women, but increasingly as Native American as well. Richard Dyer points out in his study of race and performance that white people have had the 'right to be various, literally to incorporate into themselves features of other peoples' (Dyer 2017, 49). This was certainly the case for the Millanes sisters and roles available to them which were linked to the racial and gender ideologies of a colonial system.

I have not found any evidence that Lola was criticized for depicting mixed-race Latin American women, which indeed, would have been surprising for the era. In Argentina, it was national types not ethnic ones which were contested on stage. In fact, it was quite common for Spanish actors to play a variety of racialized roles and Lola was frequently lauded for her depictions of regional types and dances from Spain and Latin America. One newspaper complimented her for performance of the Argentine folkloric dance, the *gato criollo*, also from *De paseo*, which she delivered 'with the good humor to which we have come to expect of her.' (*El Correo Español* 1890, 2). She was just as convincing performing Andalusian flamencos as she was Argentine tangos. She combined Spanish regionalisms in *Chateau Margaux*, where her Spanish flamenco was delivered with a 'Galician' flair and her delivery of a malagueña (folk song from Málaga, Spain) while strumming a guitar was also praised (*El Correo Español* 1895b, 3). Lola also knew how to cultivate ties to her Argentine

audience. For example, in a performance of the *Chateau Margaux*, set entirely in Spain, she extemporized: ‘I would die for Buenos Aires’ (*El Correo Español*, March 8, 1895, 2).

In just five years, the political climate in Buenos Aires changed reflecting Argentina’s own national consolidation, the onset of Cuban independence wars, and increasing tensions in theatres about the dominance of Spanish actors and their depiction of Argentines. In 1895, Cuban independence kept questions of Spanish colonialism in the public eye. On Argentina’s national holiday of May 25, *El Correo Español* published an editorial explaining why Cuba should not become independent, for example (1895c, 1). In addition to the question of Cuban independence, theatre in Argentina entered a unique moment where entertainment was fused to the transformation of the nation’s national guard. Political reforms created six new national guard regiments in Buenos Aires, and theatres offered benefit performances as fundraisers to support them. To further support this effort, playwrights incorporated bellicose plots into their plays, cementing the tie between theatre as a public space for recreation as well as for nation-building purposes. Furthermore, Argentina’s Minister of War gave permission for theatres to suspend a prohibition on wearing military uniforms inside, allowing the national guard regiments to show up in full dress (*La Tribuna* 1895b, 5). If days of national celebrations in Argentina were increasingly tense, the additional layer of theatre’s support for the Argentine national guard ramped things up even further. Thus, May 25 and July 9, which commemorated the establishment of self-rule (May 25, 1810) and the declaration of independence from Spain (July 9, 1816) respectively, turned into riotous scenes in 1895.

In order to contextualize what happens in theatres and how it relates to the Millanes sisters, it is important to understand the contours of the gender and social class ideology of the era. In Argentina, two social types set the standard for masculinity: *caudillos* [political strong men] and *gauchos* [cowboys—a distinct social group in the mid-nineteenth century] (Slatta 1992, 15). Caudillos were charismatic figures, who used exaggerated notions of maleness (sexual prowess, political relations based on submission and dominance, and the use of violence) to assert their will over others (Wolf, Hanson, and Hamill 1992, 62–63). Gauchos emphasized similar traits, but they did not do so from a position of political or social power. The Argentine cowboy’s nomadic way of life stressed individual freedom and feats of physical prowess, including dexterity with weaponry, related to his work with cattle and livestock on open plains. There was a

particularly close connection between Argentine national identity and these masculine types at the end of the nineteenth century (McCleary 2013, 76). In the world of theatre, these tropes were frequently expressed in one of the most popular plays of the era, Eduardo Gutiérrez' *Juan Moreira*, which was based on a true story. Moreira was unjustly persecuted by the law. He ended up being killed, stabbed in the back by the authorities. Such a cowardly act was the result of a corrupt legal system, one which reflected the modern era, replacing the gaucho's oral culture and codes of honor with that of written ones (Gutiérrez and Podestá 2008, 122–125 and Gutiérrez 2014).

In Buenos Aires, elite young men—whose life had none of the hardships of an actual gaucho—absorbed and expressed some of the traits of the Argentine cowboy, knowing that unlike Moreira, they would suffer no repercussions for their performative acts of bravura. They referred to themselves as 'Indians' and the press also referred to them as the 'indiada' ['Indian' horde], reflecting stereotypes generated by Argentina's own history where two campaigns, Juan Manuel de Rosas' Desert Campaign (1833–1834), and Julio Roca's Conquest of the Desert (1878–1885) sought to eradicate threats to the state's expansion by eliminating Indigenous peoples through warfare (Slatta 1992, 126–31).

The public nature of theatres was especially appealing to these elite young men giving them an audience for their exercises in social power (Bosch 1910, 451–454). A Spanish actor, Diego Campos, who had worked with the Millanes sisters since at least 1892, became the target of their wrath. On May 25, the company tried to avoid singing the Argentine national anthem, by appointing just one person to do so. The audience demanded that the entire company participate in the singing. Campo came to the stage and there are conflicting accounts of what happened next with *El Correo Español* (May 27 and 28, 1895d, 2) defending him and *La Tribuna*, (1895a, 2) condemning his actions relating to his handling of the Argentine flag and streamers. On May 26, the 'indiada,' returned to the theatre, sitting near the stage so they might throw eggs and chairs at him. Apparently, the chairs met their mark, wounding him badly enough so that he missed a few subsequent performances. Campo, apparently attempting to calm the situation and likely in collusion with López de Gomara, wrote a letter explaining how his actions had been misinterpreted which was then printed in *El Correo Español* (May 27 and 28, 1895d, 2).

A month after these events, Ezequiel Soria's (b. Argentina, 1873–1936) play, *Amor y Lucha* (*Love and War*), debuted at the Olimpo theater (Soria 1899). Soria drew his plot from actual border disputes between Chile and Argentina to create a fictionalized account of a war between the two nations, in which patriotism and nationalism run high (Sillone 2018). Lola plays the part of Raúl—an iconic Argentine gaucho who, according to the script, also sings in the 'national' style of Argentina, suggesting that great delicacy was required to play this role given the political volatility of the moment (Soria 1899, 8). I assume that this curious casting decision was made because Campo—the natural choice to play Raúl—had become a lightning rod drawing the 'indiada' to theatres and sowing chaos there.

*Amor y Lucha* tells the story of the gaucho Raúl and his love interest, Julia, played by Carlota, set two years into the future with the play imagining that the border conflict has erupted into war. Casting Carlota as Raúl's love interest was yet another puzzling choice. It meant that Lola and Carlota—both well-known as actresses and as sisters—would have romantic scenes together. The play focuses on Raúl and Julia's romance and Raúl's jealousy towards Julia after he sees her in intimate conversation with another man, Tuper. It turns out that Julia and Tuper are half-siblings, but due to a complex backstory, their relationship has been kept secret. Acting on his jealous suspicions, Raúl seeks out Tuper, challenging him to a duel—as would be expected of a gaucho in such a situation. Raúl is about to kill Tuper, when Julia arrives and tells him the truth about their relationship. They make amends, Raúl returns to battle but is tragically killed. Julia, who has followed Raúl to the battlefield, takes up arms in his stead (Soria 1899, 12, 35–37).

Lola and Carlota were lauded for their performances and, since they were in most of the scenes of the play, for its success (*La Tribuna* 1895c, 3). Both sisters perform non-traditional gender roles in the play. I am most intrigued by Lola, a Spanish woman, depicting the macho Argentine gaucho and how that was apparently acceptable to an Argentine audience. Lola's ability to perform Argentine types well, to cultivate the Argentine audience, allowed her to execute the role of a soldier/gaucho without drawing attention to the unorthodox casting. Because Lola was also the co-director of the acting company that performed *Amor y Lucha*, it is clear she had achieved a high level of respect and legitimacy, another measure of freedom allowing her to depict Raúl without too much scrutiny (Pellettieri 2001, 43). Carlota's depiction of a woman taking up arms in battle was

also atypical for an era where women had no role in state affairs—not through the vote nor through military service.

Was it so common for women to take on male roles that play critics did not even mention it as a novelty? Women often did perform male characters in Spanish popular theatre. Lola and Carlota both played the altar boy in *El monaguillo* (*The Altar Boy*), Lola was the devil in *El diablo en el Molino* [*The Devil in the Windmill*], and the king in the zarzuela, *El rey que rabió* [*The King Who Went Mad*] (*El Cascabel*, February 3, 1892 and *El Cascabel*, January 12, 1892). Carlota played the dauphin in *La tragedia de Pierrot* [*The Tragedy of Pierrot*] (*Páginas Ilustradas* 1907b, 2410). Still, playing the role of Raúl in *Amor y lucha*, was quite a different enterprise since it was a tragedy where transgender roles were not as frequent as they were in comedies. Arguably 1895 presented a unique moment where the construction of masculinity was so volatile given the context of nation building and the decline of Spain's power in the Americas that it became easier for Spanish women to play male Argentine characters than for Spanish men to do so. Such representations also created opportunities for audience members to see women in dynamic roles that were undefined by strict gender codes. These types of stage representations were an early step towards accepting actual women in non-traditional social roles.

Issues related to masculinity and the performance of nationality followed Lola to Brazil where, once again, she found herself in fraught terrain related to the representations of national types—only here the tensions focused largely on how the play depicted Brazilians. In 1894, the Argentine playwright, Nicolás Granada, wrote a play, *Juca-Tigre*, based on contemporaneous events related to a caudillo who fought in the civil war in Brazil between 1893–1895 (Granada 1896). In 1896, two years after the play had first been performed in Argentina, Granada accompanied the Pastor Spanish Company by steam vapor to Rio de Janeiro. Lola was part of this company. Upon arrival, the company was met with an organized protest trying to block their disembarkation, led by students from Brazil's military academy who interpreted the play as mocking Brazilian soldiers. Actors had to blend in with other passengers in order to safely exit the ship. To resolve the conflict, Brazilian police recommended that the women of the acting company take the lead on defusing the situation (Granada 1896, 9). The request to have women be lead negotiators is reminiscent of the reason Lola played the role of a macho gaucho: women could de-escalate tensions that would be impossible for men to do so given the codes of masculinity of the era. Apparently, this did not happen, and the acting

company returned to Buenos Aires without performing the controversial play in Rio de Janeiro.

Carlota and Lola commonly performed in roles designated as male, even though it would be their daughters and nieces who are later credited with breaking ‘gender’ barriers: Teresa Saavedra (b. Spain, 1894–1984, born to Teresa Millanes Allue (1867–1933)), has been credited as being the first woman in Europe to perform on stage dressed in a tuxedo—a curious detail which must have carried meaning at the time—in *El príncipe carnaval* [*The Carnival Prince*] (1920) (‘Ha muerto Teresita Saavedra,’ 1894). The press has also highlighted the importance of María Caballé, Carlota’s daughter, for transgressing gender boundaries when she was photographed as a ‘lady’ bullfighter, appearing before the Prince of Wales in 1927 (Smith Archive 1927, Alamy Stock Photo). The gendered landscapes of the twentieth century rendered something which had previously been mundane—women dressing as men on stage to perform male roles—into something now seen as remarkable.

### BEYOND BUENOS AIRES: CARLOTA MILLANES BECOMES MEXICAN

During her career, Lola frequently moved between two main territories: Spain and Argentina. These dual home bases were possible due to the dominance of the zarzuela in Madrid and Buenos Aires. Carlota moved much more than her sister had especially in the years after Lola’s death in 1906. Carlota lived and performed in Spain in 1903 and 1904 but by 1905 and 1906 she was back traveling through the Americas. She travelled and performed throughout Ecuador, Peru, Honduras, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Cuba between 1905–1909. It is likely that her children were not with her for much of this time. Her eldest daughter, María, at the very least, mentions ‘reuniting’ with her mother in 1906 in Central America (Fiol 1923).

Here I offer a brief example of Carlota’s peripatetic ways in the wake of Lola’s death in August 1906. I have been unable to track Carlota’s movements in August but by September, she was performing in Lima, Peru, accompanied by her sister, Teresa, and daughter, María (*El Arte del teatro* (Madrid), 1906, 23 and *El Heraldo de Madrid*, Sept. 19, 1906, 3). Carlota performed in Trujillo, Peru, then moved onto Panama working at the Teatro Nacional in Panama City. She, Teresa, and María returned to South

America, performing in Guayaquil and Quito, Ecuador. Notably, Carlota and Teresa performed in the drama, *Abuela*, in 1907. This play had recently been penned by the feminist Ecuadorean author, Mercedes González de Moscoso (b. Ecuador, 1860–1911). The collaboration between the Millanes sisters and González de Moscoso suggests that theatre, at times, created a circuit of intellectual vanguardism. Indeed, *Abuela* is an explicitly feminist play (González de Moscoso 1906, 6).

Following this, Carlota returned once more to Peru with a contract to work at the Teatro Principal in Lima before touring Peru's northern provinces ('News from the Americas,' 1907, 1). In June, Carlota, Teresa, and María moved onto Costa Rica where 'la señorita' Millanes—possibly María since Carlota is referred to as 'señora' in the press—performs as Angelita in *Chateau Margaux*, a role that both Lola and Carlota had played for most of their careers (*Páginas Ilustradas* 1907a, 2370). One journalist criticized the company's performance of Verdi's *Traviata*, using the most painful language possible, given that Lola had drowned less than a year before in an actual shipwreck: '[Carlota] Millanes was able to save herself from the shipwreck [of a play] and we felt very sorry for her because of the sweat that must have been flowing down her body due to the exertions she made [on stage]' (*Páginas Ilustradas*, 1907, 1249). The same magazine criticized her once again speculating that she must have either been sick or simply forgotten her lines when they reviewed her performance another evening (*Páginas Ilustradas* 1907c, 2426). It is possible she was in mourning or sick or both because after June, *Páginas Ilustradas* returned to lauding her performances, signaling a recovery on her part. Reading between the lines, it is easy to see that the rigors of work combined with grief took a toll on her evident in her performances. The particular lack of sympathy offered to her by the press, however, provides a small window into the day-to-day challenges of her life on the road in the wake of personal tragedy. Still, she continued touring. In 1908, Carlota performed in Cuba: Her name appeared in *Gazeta Oficial de Cuba*, for letters that were not picked up for lack of sufficient address (1908, 5765). She also worked in Colombia that year.

Carlota relocated to Mexico, somewhat permanently, in 1909 (Borroso 1911, 6). One magazine shows how many of her family members worked together there that year (*Arte y Letras*, 1909, 16) when she performed in a play with Isabel Saavedra (her niece, daughter of Teresa), her daughter, María Caballé, and her sister, María Millanes. These connections also point to the importance of Joaquín Coss, the husband of Emilia Jordan



Millanes (daughter of María Millanes), for unifying them in Mexico. Like the Millanes family, Coss, too, was from Barcelona. He had performed with Lola and Carlota in the same zarzuela companies for years. Coss performed with them in *Amor y Lucha*, for example (Soria 1899, 5). He had moved to Mexico in 1904 working in theatre. Over the years, he found success in silent cinema, working with film stars like Cantínflas, (1911–1993) the comedian who dominated the Golden Age of Mexican cinema. Coss also worked with Mimi Derba (1893–1953), who had founded Azteca cinema, Mexico’s first national film studio. Derba was also a theatre performer and also from Spain—her parents were from Bilbao (García 2007, 100). Carlota and María Caballé worked with Derba in 1913, performing in the one-act musical comedy, *El país de la metralla* [*The Country of Shrapnel*] in Mexico City’s Teatro Lírico. In 1917, Coss wrote the script for the silent film, *En defensa propia* [*In Self Defense*], in which both Derba and María Caballé appear. Theatre continued to connect the Millanes family to feminist intellectuals who used the arts to explore and promote social change, but it seems that Coss had the possibilities to have the central career in Mexico, around which the family united.

Lola’s fame as a zarzuela performer and her relative stability in two cities meant that she was known as being Spanish. However, this was not the case for Carlota, whose nationality shifts once she is outside of the dominant urban centers of the zarzuela circuit. Theatre managers advertise her by comparing her to globally known opera stars: In Costa Rica, she was the ‘Patti of the zarzuela,’ with the advertisement referencing Adelina Patti (b. Madrid to Italian parents, 1843–1919) (Moncloa y Covarrubias 1905, 99). In California, Carlota was advertised as the ‘Mexican Tetrzzini,’ (*Complimentary Souvenir Album* 1915, 186) evoking opera star, Luisa Tetrzzini (b. Italy 1871–1940), and identifying Carlota as being Mexican not Spanish. Over time, Carlota became increasingly misidentified as ‘Mexican’ in both primary and secondary sources of the era (Largey 2006, 121). She became thoroughly integrated into Mexican theatrical life and her Spanish heritage rendered increasingly invisible. She continued to portray men, even once depicting Francisco León de la Barra (1863–1939), Mexico’s interim president in 1911, in *El futuro funcionario* (*The Future Bureaucrat*), a political satire (Quiroga Pérez 2008, 1–2). Several things might explain the ‘Mexicanization’ of Carlota. In Mexico, Carlota tended to perform in smaller roles and peripheral theatres. She had become marginalized there due to her age, her lack of stardom, and the decline of the

zarzuela as a popular theatrical genre. Claiming a Spanish identity did not help her stage career. For all intents and purposes, that was now better supported through a Mexican identity.

Carlota continued migrating northward for short tours. In 1915, she, her two daughters and one son-in-law, musician German Bilbao, performed in the Mexican exhibition for San Francisco's 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE). The PPIE attracted 18 million visitors in just about three months (Markwyn 2016, 52). If Lola had performed as a mulata in the late nineteenth century, Carlota and her daughters now depicted indigenous Mexican women. Carlota performed as part of Mexico's exhibit, the Tehuantepec Village, in the 'Joy Zone,' of the PPIE. It was described to the press as presenting 'A Bit of Old Aztec Land,' to spectators (Cannata 2014, 86–87). (Tehuantepec is an actual village in Mexico, and the Tehuana people who live there are known for having a matriarchal culture.) At the PPIE, the exhibit contained a hodgepodge of Mexican stereotypes of indigeneity, advertising that it featured dances of the Aztec peoples past and present, as well as Aztec and Toltec artisanal crafts and dances.

María had recently performed as a Native American character, 'La Indita' ['the Indian sweetheart'] in the comedy, *Tenorio Sam* [*Uncle Sam, the Lady-Killer*] (Foppa *Fray Mocho*, 1913), a parody of José Zorrilla's *Don Juan Tenorio* (Anzzolin 2023, 47.) In the cast notes, the character is described as being of 'pure Aztec' heritage. Anzzolin argues that she represents the Mexican nation-state to a working-class audience (2023, 50). The phenomenon of 'racial masquerading' in Mexico where white actors perform as indigenous peoples has primarily been studied in relationship to cinema (García Blizzard 2022). Film emerged out of these theatrical traditions. Carlota and María show just how important actors from Spain were in the contemporary racialization of indigenous peoples into being 'white' in stage plays which set the template for early Mexican cinema. That Spanish actors were cast as Mexican indigenous women reveals the complexity of staged performances as they intersected with ethnic and national identities. Carlota's Spanish and María's Argentine national identities had been erased. However, their whiteness had not.

Carlota's continual northward movements during the peak years of the Mexican Revolution—which often was fought near the US-Mexican border—had been a bit of a mystery to me. Lacking any concrete evidence, I surmised that by 1915, Carlota was 50 years old, likely past her prime as a star of the stage, so maybe she had to chase after work. In addition,

zarzuelas and operettas had given way to musical reviews with their emphasis on skimpy costumes, and song and dance numbers performed by women closer in age to her daughters. Maybe during the turbulence of the revolution, fewer actors wanted to face the potential danger of northern Mexico and thus more jobs were available to her? Or perhaps, Carlota followed her more employable family members to wherever it was that they could find work?

I finally found the answer to this puzzle when I located a 1923 interview which her eldest daughter, María Caballé, gave to the Spanish magazine, *La Esfera*. This interview fills in some of the gaps about Carlota's role as a mother, a significant aspect of her life and career that most of my sources did not really touch upon. María explained that in 1914, when she was about 22, she was performing in the previously mentioned musical, *Tenorio Sam*, at the Teatro Lírico, in Mexico City. Victoriano de la Huerta (1850–1916) was the self-declared head of state, declaring himself as such in 1913 after he had conspired to assassinate President Francisco Madero (1873–1913). Huerta, himself, would be overthrown in June 1914, just a couple of months after *Tenorio Sam's* February 28 opening. Huerta frequented the theatre where María worked. She recalled that he was intrigued by the fact that a young Argentine woman like herself would play a Mexican character 'with such great passion.' According to María, Huerta liked her a little too much and increasingly pressured her to have sexual relations with him. María said that she and her mother could only come up with one way out of the precarious situation and that was to flee. One night after her performance, Carlota drove an automobile to the theatre awaiting María to exit the theatre once the play had ended. They then drove many hours north and eventually made their way to San Francisco, where they were already scheduled to perform in the PPIE, along with Emilia (Fiol 1923). María married Rafael Martínez Álvarez a few months later. At the time of Huerta's advances, she was single and Carlota a widow (María's marriage certificate from November 23, 1914, lists her father as deceased. November 23, 1914, Civil Registry, Michoacan Mexico).

María certainly offered a cinematic tale of intrigue and escape from the clutches of the powerful and violent Huerta. Much of it rings true, of course, especially in this post-Harvey Weinstein era of the twenty-first century. Carlota's migrations were always shaped to a certain extent by her family but María's story allows us to see how Carlota, as head of household, took action to protect her daughter. Her decision to continue

working allowed her to continue to make money but also, and more importantly, to mentor, protect, and advocate for her daughters, who had also chosen to live a very public life during precarious times in Mexico.

## CONCLUSION

Lola and Carlota were amongst the first female performers to export Spanish popular theatre to the Americas. They were 'stage migrants,' a career made possible because of transformations in travel and communication technologies which allowed for the movement of people and scripts from one side of the Atlantic to the other and beyond. Lola's career as a star during the height of Spanish popular theatre in the Americas meant that she had to negotiate the fraught politics of entertaining Spain's former colonies during an era of intensified nation-building which was largely a masculine enterprise. Ironically, since this was an era where politics was in the domain of men, women performers were more easily able to soothe over nationalistic tensions through 'soft' cultural diplomacy.

In Argentina, the audience always knew Lola and Carlota were Spanish. For Carlota, who continued to work on the stage as a middle-aged woman, and who was increasingly cast in supporting rather than starring roles, she became identified as Mexican. An emphasis on whiteness in Mexican theatre and, later, cinema, allowed her transformation from Spaniard to Mexican to occur seamlessly and without questions asked—the opposite of Lola's experience in Argentina where Lola was always known as being Spanish. Their lives show that society had created spaces for gender roles to be transformative whereas racial and ethnic ones still reflected deep structural ties to the past and a present which commodified and mimicked indigeneity and mixed-race women.

As women performers on the move, Lola and Carlota had lives full of adventure, including tragedy, most clearly signified by Lola's death in a shipwreck. Family networks and units were an essential element of their migrations. The contours of much of their public lives were framed by codes of masculinity, be it irate audience members demanding that Spanish actors perform Brazilian and Argentine national types authentically or from overbearing politicians. Yet, at the same time their migrations allowed them to be in command of their lives through their own work which gave them economic independence and by meeting and collaborating with a feminist vanguard of Latin American theatre and cinema, and in many

other ways. Lola and Carlota were on the center stage of the public sphere, carving out new models of womanhood and preparing the next generation of women to do the same.

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# Migration and Exclusion: Ryszard Ordyński—A Theatre ‘Vagabond’

*Karolina Prykowska-Michalak*

Lands and seas, people and talents, dreams and achievements. When I look from the side, a long chunk of time. A chunk of life of an artist condemned and voluntarily condemning himself to be a wanderer. (Ordyński 1956, 37)

Vagabond, to quote contemporary migration scholar Thomas Nail, comes from ‘the Latin *vagus*, meaning ‘to wander’, and the Latin *proprius*, meaning ‘one’s own way’, [therefore it] is also the name of the migrant whose free wandering has its own techniques of pedetic force’ (2015, 146). Zygmunt Bauman similarly invokes the term ‘vagabond’ in *Globalisation* and points out that vagabonds are ‘on the move because they have been pushed from behind—having first been spiritually uprooted from the place that holds no promise, by a force of seduction or propulsion too powerful, and often too mysterious, to resist’ (2000, 142). Bauman suggests that the

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two types of mobility he analyses, the tourist and the vagabond, are interconnected, among other things, by the same experience of movement, resulting in various forms and degrees of expulsion from the social order.

In the centre of this chapter, I would like by reconstructing the migration paths of the director Ryszard Ordyński (1878–1953) to raise the question of the consequences of migration mentioned here; namely, the reasons for the expulsion of the migrant-vagabond from the community he leaves. Expulsion from the social order due to migration seems to be a linear process, as a person who changes the centre of his life becomes forgotten by those who remain in the original place, and due to the lack of knowledge about his current achievements, he is removed from the collective memory of the society he left. In the case of artists associated with the theatre—as is the case in this article—whose successes are publicly known and widely announced, the exclusion from the social order is not a process of simple forgetting. Updated information about artistic achievements, subsequent wanderings, and guest appearances significantly weakens the degree of forgetting and, therefore, expulsion from memory. Exclusion or oblivion can occur due to a lack of any or insignificant artistic achievements. This is, however, not the case in the account presented here.

The main concern of this article is therefore the exclusion of Ryszard Ordyński from the Polish theatre scene. Ordyński, due to his migrations across Europe and the United States (in the years 1910–1918), achieved success as a collaborator of Max Reinhardt, as a director at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, and as an independent creator of spectacular performances, such as *Caliban by the Yellow Sands*.<sup>1</sup> However, the Polish theatre—and this is the thesis of my article—did not make use of either his artistic potential or his managerial experience and international connections. There were many opportunities to do so, as Ordyński repeatedly applied for positions in Kraków and Warsaw theatres but was only sporadically offered directing positions. Ordyński is an intriguing case of a ‘vagabond’—as he called himself—who, at the end of his life, in 1939, recorded in his memoirs that his goal was ‘the search for something as far away as possible from the mundane successes of one day and box office hits. Embracing and surrendering to everything that has the power of expression and the courage to resist artistic routine and shallowness, thus

<sup>1</sup>The outdoor spectacle *Caliban by the Yellow Sands* was performed at the Lewisohn Stadium of the City College of New York. Percy MacKaye devised this play in celebration of the 300th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death. The play premiered on 28 July 1916.

earning the right to survive in human memory' (Ordyński 1956). The question of this 'right', or rather of the mechanisms that have led to Ordyński being known only among a narrow circle of theatre historians in Poland (to researchers of Reinhardt's work, he is simply one of many collaborators), opens up several contexts that will be taken up in the following article, including judging foreign artists on moral grounds rather than on their artistic merit. I will therefore briefly outline the situation of Polish theatre before World War I, as well as the subsequent stages of Ryszard Ordyński's migration, first to Max Reinhardt's theatre in Berlin, and then to the United States. In the subsection titled *Exclusion from the social order*, I explain the processes that led to Ordyński never being appreciated by either theatre directors or theatre artists, all of whom had a significant influence on casting decisions in Polish theatres.

### POLISH THEATRE PRIOR TO WORLD WAR I

Following three subsequent partitions, the Polish state ceased to exist between 1795 and 1918.<sup>2</sup> Land which had previously belonged to Poland came under the dominion of three major powers: Prussia, Austria, and the Russian Empire; its inhabitants became Prussian, Austrian, or Russian, respectively. A semi-autonomous Kingdom of Poland was established in 1815 at the Congress of Vienna and existed as a *de iure* part of the Russian Empire until 1917. When studying the over a century-long period of Polish dependence on foreign powers, several important movements and events must be highlighted. These include the Great Emigration, a period during which leading intellectuals, artists, and scientists (e.g., Adam Mickiewicz and Fryderyk Chopin) went into exile, mainly in France, having become disillusioned by the failure of the November Uprising in 1830. Likewise, it is important to emphasize the autonomy of Galicia, a region under Austrian rule, where Polish was introduced as an official language as a result of the Austro-Polish compromise in 1869. This was in stark contrast to the Prussian and Russian partitions, which pursued policies of Germanization and Russification, respectively. Therefore, creators of culture, especially writers and theatrical figures, played a significant role in preserving Polish national identity and the Polish language. It is important

<sup>2</sup>The Partitions of Poland occurred in three stages: I: 1772, II: 1793, III: 1795.

to note that theatres were allowed to stage performances in the Polish language, which was a significant breakthrough and exemption in this policy of assimilation. The term ‘Polish theatre’ was coined to describe the entirety of Polish-language theatre work and the term remains in use to this day. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, censorship (mainly in the Russian and Prussian partitions) did not allow national or patriotic content on stage, nor were Polish works written in emigration performed. This led to a gap between dramatic creativity produced in emigration (by figures such as Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, and Cyprian Kamil Norwid) and the theatrical practice of Warsaw stages. This gap was only bridged at the turn of the twentieth century, first in Kraków, where the liberal Austrian policy allowed the works of Słowacki and Wyspiański to be performed. Later, due to the migration of actors, progress was also made in Warsaw. Travel between the partitions by theatre people, often entire theatre companies, for performances in major theatrical centres such as Warsaw and Łódź in the Russian partition, Poznań in the Prussian partition, and Kraków and Lwów in Galicia, was a common practice during this period.<sup>3</sup> Kraków was one of the most important hubs for Polish theatre in the latter half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. This sentiment was shared by Wilam Horzycza, stage director and close friend of Ordyński, when describing the theatrical landscape in which Ordyński was raised:

Kraków, at the turn of the last two centuries, was by no means a province in relation to the rest of Europe when it came to theatre. What the Kraków stage lived for at that time was not just the ‘novelties’ from Paris or Berlin, not merely chewing over what had already been done elsewhere earlier and better, but it had its own goals and ideas, its own diverse aspirations and achievements. Four names can define these: Koźmian,<sup>4</sup> Pawlikowski,<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In the nineteenth century, there were also numerous Jewish and German theatrical troupes working on Polish lands (Prykowska-Michalak, *Teatr niemiecki w Polsce XVIII–XX wiek* 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Artistic director (1866–1868) and director of the Kraków theatre (1871–1885), a critic and director. As a director, he is often referred to as the founder of the ‘Kraków school.’ His troupe included the actress Helena Modrzejewska (Modreska) (Cf. <https://encyklopedia-teatru.pl/osoby/60467/stanislaw-kozmian>).

<sup>5</sup> Director of the Municipal Theatre in Kraków (1893–1899 and 1913–1915) as well as the Municipal Theatre in Lwów (1900–1906).

Kotarbiński,<sup>6</sup> and Wyspiański.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the Kraków theatre, in the course of the last century and just a few years into the current one, managed to create an atmosphere around itself that radiated creative thought and stage passion. This had an impact on the closest cultural environment as well as on other Polish theatrical hubs (1956, 6).

Ryszard Ordyński, the central figure of this article, was not part of the world of theatre when he left Galicia. He was neither a writer nor a recognized actor or director; instead, he was a high school teacher. This is why, during his later period of collaboration with Max Reinhardt (as well as his subsequent work in America), he was dubbed a ‘Professor’. He left Kraków not for political or work-related reasons, but to further his education and gain new experiences. To Ordyński, Poland remained a point of reference, a country whose statehood did not exist, but whose cultural tradition was nonetheless preserved even following the partitions.

#### IN THE THEATRE OF MAX REINHARDT

Ryszard Ordyński, whose proper name was Dawid Blumenfeld, was born to a Jewish family living in Maków Podhalański. He received his high school education and attended university in Kraków, then part of the Austrian partition, where he also worked as a high school teacher starting in 1901. During this time, he intensified his interest in theatre, translating plays primarily from German and English, and began collaborating as a theatre critic with the periodicals *Nowa Reforma* and *Gazeta Powszechna*. To quote theatre historian Roman Taborski:

[Ordyński’s] youth was marked by his acquaintances and friendships with prominent figures of the artistic world. For a time, he lived in the same house (at 2 Zacisze Street) as Stanisław Wyspiański [...]. He also maintained close relationships with Ludwik Solski, Teofil Trzciański, Leon Schiller, Wilhelm Feldman, Ludwik Pasztet, Władysław Orkan, Maciej Szukiewicz, Juliusz Osterwa, Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński, and Arnold Szyfman [...]. (Taborski 1983a, 71)

<sup>6</sup> Actor, director, literary manager, and theatre director. From 1893 onwards, he worked as an actor and chief director at the Kraków theatre. From 1899 to 1905, while serving as the director of the Kraków theatre, he introduced a vast repertoire of romantic plays and dramas by Stanisław Wyspiański (<https://encyklopediateatru.pl/osoby/26730/jozef-kotarbinski>).

<sup>7</sup> Playwright, poet, director, and creator of modern Polish theatre. He travelled throughout Western Europe (1890–1894) and spent three years in Paris at the Académie Colarossi (cf. <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/autorzy/161/stanislaw-wyspianski>).

Ordyński was therefore a witness to the breakthrough that occurred in Polish theatre thanks to the artists and theatre reformers mentioned by Taborski above. He must have possessed a remarkable sensitivity to art, which he revealed as a theatre critic, as well as a great deal of self-confidence that he gained during his travels across Europe between 1908 and 1910. He documented his travel experiences in the Warsaw press, specifically in *Przegląd Ilustrowany*, and the weekly magazine *Świat* (Taborski 1983a).

In 1908, Ordyński journeyed to Paris and London to acquaint himself with the public library systems. During this time, he also worked in various social organizations. On his way back to Kraków, in 1909, he visited the International Art Exhibition that was taking place in Munich (X. Internationalen Kunstausstellung im kgl. Glaspalast zu München). The year 1909 was therefore a turning point in his life, as it was then that he became familiar with the theatre of Max Reinhard. A year later, during the 1910 theatre season in Berlin, he started to work more closely with Reinhardt as his guest and assistant.

But how did a high school teacher from Kraków become an assistant in such a renowned theatrical conglomerate? Reconstructing that exact moment is challenging, but I will nonetheless consider several potential contributing factors. Ordyński knew both German and English, which definitely aided his first steps in securing a job related to the theatre. Roman Taborski also points to Ordyński's extensive knowledge and expertise in theatre, which he gained in Kraków when attending performances at Kotarbiński's theatre, conversing with Wyspiański, and attending performances by Kawakami's troupe during their tour in Kraków in 1902. Analysing writings and numerous publications about Max Reinhardt's work reveals two main observations that indicate a very real possibility of accepting a young Ordyński into the Deutsches Theater ensemble. First was the vast scale of Reinhardt's theatrical business, which boasted a seriously impressive number of productions (over 700 between 1909 and 1915) and therefore needed many employees, which included assistants and directors<sup>8</sup> (Rothe 1930). Moreover, the Deutsches Theater and Kammerspiele were multicultural and multiethnic environments, and their most renowned actors, including Aleksander Moissi, Leopoldine Konstantin, Vladimir Sokoloff, could be considered migrants in the modern sense of the word. Ordyński joined the Deutsches Theater in 1910 as

<sup>8</sup> Ordyński's name is listed as one of over fifty collaborators in *Max Reinhardt 25 Jahre Deutsches Theater, Ein Tafelwerk*, 1930 edited by Hans Rothe.

a volunteer tasked with shadowing the director and performing simple tasks related to the ongoing productions. During his first season, Max Reinhardt introduced him to Berthold Held, a friend from the Schall und Rauch theatre. In a letter to Held, Reinhardt wrote, ‘Take Professor Ordyński under your wing, he wishes to be with us as a volunteer for a year. He is to help you wherever possible’ (Hadamovsky 1963, 46). Held had various roles in Reinhardt’s theatrical company, from technical manager to assistant director. In the same season, Held directed *Der natürliche Vater* by Herbert Eulenberg, and Ordyński had the opportunity to assist.<sup>9</sup> However, Ordyński had greater ambitions. In the spring of 1910, he travelled to Moscow (where his brother had been living for several years) at Reinhardt’s behest to track the innovations in Konstantin Stanislavski’s productions. Ordyński himself said:

Moscow [...] was a much-anticipated stage for me. I knew quite a lot about Russian theatre, I was familiar with the types of theatre that the Moscow Art Theatre represented—however, I did not expect such a revelation. (1938, 388–389)

The stay in Moscow was a significant turning point in Ordyński’s development as a director. In addition to Stanislavski, he also met Ryszard Bolesławski and Edward G. Craig, who was then working on a staging of *Hamlet*. Ordyński was familiar with Craig’s theoretical works and his views on art, partly through the writings of Leon Schiller. Did Ordyński have the chance to become a true middleman in the transfer of knowledge about Craig’s and Reinhardt’s staging ideas? It is quite hard to determine. The dispute between Reinhardt and Craig had been ongoing since 1904 (Leyko 2023a, 59–61). Some sources suggest that Ordyński’s mission was to reconcile these two theatre reformers. However, Craig’s letters to Schiller’s romantic companion describe Ordyński thusly: ‘[...] he is a great enthusiast, but unfortunately, his admiration for the thieving German gang does not work in his favour’ (Correspondence between Leon Schiller and Edward Gordon Craig 1968, 474). Here, I would like to emphasize the clear identification of Ordyński with the German theatre. This was certainly no coincidence, because Ordyński worked for a long time within Reinhardt’s theatrical conglomerate, which lasted from the autumn of

<sup>9</sup> Cf. <http://www.berliner-schauspielschule.de/held.htm>.

1910 until the outbreak of World War I.<sup>10</sup> During his collaboration with Reinhardt Ordyński undertook numerous work-related journeys, including to the Festspiele in Munich in the summer of 1910, where the Deutsches Theater was once again performing. Of note was Max Reinhardt's, or rather Ordyński's, staging of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as an open-air performance in Murnau at a park designed by the architect Emmanuel von Seidl (Leyko 2014). The spectacle was a success and was the first major directorial success attributed to Ordyński (the concept of the play, however, was credited only to Reinhardt).

The next work trip led Ordyński to London, where he once again took up tasks related to his employment as theatre manager. The aim was to establish contacts with the London Coliseum Theatre of Varieties, a relatively new and modern theatre which opened in 1905 and eagerly accepted Reinhardt's/Ordyński's offer to stage the pantomime *Sumurun* (Taborski 1983a). From then on, Ordyński's journeys and career were closely tied to this production. Reinhardt was preoccupied with other commitments (such as the premiere of *Das Mirakel*, in London on 23 December 1911, or a European tour in 1912–1914) and thus entrusted the full production of the pantomime to Ordyński. Each of the many subsequent stagings required adjustments to the new conditions and the visiting audience. *Sumurun* was a spectacle characteristic of Reinhardt's theatre aesthetics, which undoubtedly contributed to the success of both the theatre and Ordyński in America (Leyko 2023b).<sup>11</sup> The production was mainly based on dance and pantomime, and was characterized by its spectacular nature, suggestive sets by Erast Stern, and richly ornamented and highly colourful costumes stylized after Far Eastern exoticism. As theatre historian Mariola Szydłowska points out, 'the production of *Sumurun* intrigued American audiences with atmospheric lighting, expressive acting, illustrative music by Victor Holoender, and, finally, the presence of a 'flower path' borrowed from Japanese theatre, a bridge connecting the stage to the audience and

<sup>10</sup>From the autumn of 1910, Ordyński received an official contract within Reinhardt's theatrical empire and co-created many productions without credit. He left the Deutsches Theater at the outbreak of World War I, citing the completion of his apprenticeship under the master and the desire to chart his own path as the reasons for his departure.

<sup>11</sup>Leyko states: 'Heinrich Huesmann's report Welttheater Reinhardt..., which documents Reinhardt's performances, does not provide information about performances outside of New York; this piece of information comes from Ryszard Ordyński, who additionally estimated that *Sumurun* had a total of one thousand performances' (Ordyński 1956, 172, 163).



allowing simultaneous depiction of events' (2009, 18). Ordyński and his ensemble presented it in 1912 at the Casino in New York, and later in Chicago, Boston, and Philadelphia.

The American tour of *Sumurun* proved to be incredibly beneficial to Ordyński. He met influential people and became familiar with the working conditions of many theatres. Paradoxically, the success of this venture also made him realize the potential dangers of working with a towering personality. By apprenticing for four seasons at the Deutsches Theater, Ordyński witnessed many successes but also an oversaturation of sorts, as this theatre soon began to lose its revolutionary spirit. The Viennese theatre critic Handl reportedly wrote that this theatre 'has no purpose; it cultivates its forces and its art only for its own sake...' (Ordyński 1956, 22). Nevertheless, Ordyński decided to leverage these connections by trying his hand as an independent director in the United States.

#### INDEPENDENT DIRECTOR IN THE UNITED STATES AND REINHARDT'S MIDDLEMAN

Ordyński spent the years of World War I in America. He travelled from coast to coast working on various dramatic and musical productions. As noted by Mariola Szydłowska:

In the United States, not only was he remembered as Reinhardt's disciple, but he was still referred to as such, and the name of the German reformer opened doors to many theatres. Ordyński's personal qualities were also significant: erudition, elegance, social refinement, and the manners of a cosmopolitan. In establishing connections in the theatrical and film world, which was largely funded by Jewish capital, the director's background also helped. Ordyński, who converted to Christianity only in 1896 and changed his original surname, David Blumenfeld, to Ordyński in 1900, counted on the [financial] support of Otto Kahn and the Shubert brothers, who also had Jewish roots. (2009, 21)

One must not forget that the organization of American theatre was based on a system of commercial productions. What really mattered was what was accepted by the production conglomerate, including the aforementioned Shuberts, and gained recognition on Broadway. The American interest in European artistic theatre, New Stagecraft, or The Little Theatre Movement, all of which were artistic endeavours in which Ordyński

excelled, could not be devoid of the financial effect. The latter, however, was not always a given. Ordyński's successes in the United States were determined by productions either based on Reinhardt's ideas or with aesthetics closely tied to Reinhardt's theatre. The latter category includes the open-air spectacle *Caliban by the Yellow Sands*, presented on 24 May 1916 at the Lewisohn Stadium of the City College of New York. This play was staged to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Shakespeare's death and was part of the mass theatre trend. Approximately 135,000 spectators attended ten stagings of the play. Ordyński received praise for his direction, which mainly involved managing the 1500 performers on stage (Szydłowska 2009, 26–27).

As an expert on various forms of spectacles and performances, Ordyński also found himself involved in the so-called Little Theatre Movement in the autumn of 1916. This movement aimed to produce experimental performances and chamber plays. Ordyński recruited Aline Bransdall to join his theatre in Los Angeles. She had already run a similar theatre in Chicago two years prior. 'They considered both stagings [Osip Dymov's *Nju*, Zoe Akins' *Papa*] the best in the history of Los Angeles theatre, hailed the director as a creative genius, and declared that his activities were an honour and privilege for the city' (Szydłowska 2009, 31). Taking advantage of his good streak, Ordyński proposed to stage the flagship production of mass theatre, *Everyman*, based on Reinhardt's staging, to captivate the Californian audience. The premiere took place on 9 January 1917, at the Trinity Auditorium in Los Angeles (Szydłowska 2009, 33).

The culmination of Ordyński's theatre career in the United States was arguably his position as chief director in the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. During the three seasons he spent at the Met, he collaborated with numerous theatre migrants such as Enrico Caruso, Adam Didur, Margaret Matzenauer and Joseph Urban, whom he had met during his collaboration with Reinhardt (Szydłowska 2001).

Did Ordyński take full advantage of his stay in the United States? A detailed reconstruction of his artistic journey in America was undertaken by Mariola Szydłowska; here, I highlighted only several key points which indicate Ordyński's utilization of the popularity of European theatre and Reinhardt's name in the United States. Ordyński became the middleman for Reinhardt's new theatrical style, encompassing various styles from chamber performances to large open-air spectacles. He also transferred Reinhardt's principles on contemporary directing, such as by teaching at

the Harvard Dramatic Club. While producing his artistic works, he nurtured a network of young collaborators: budding actors, directors, and set designers.

### EXCLUSION FROM POLISH THEATRE

So why did this experienced theatre maker find little recognition in Polish theatre, even though he returned to the country in 1920 as a renowned director at the peak of his fame? In my opinion, the reasons for this arise from the same circumstances that made him famous in the United States, that is, from the specific conjuncture of factors that exert a significant, mainly positive, influence on the conditions of development—in this case, in the theatre. Conjuncture is also a category used in the concept of cultural transfer; it arises as a result of acute deficits in the receiving culture. Ordyński happened to meet the demand in US-American theatre for purely artistic activities, new trends (expressionism, symbolism), and an interest in a theatre liberated from naturalism.<sup>12</sup> But it is not just these specific circumstances that made him successful; it is hard to deny Ordyński's other qualities, such as his extensive experience in working on various stages, his interpersonal and managerial skills, and his knowledge of various theatrical techniques and aesthetics. In this sense, the experiences he gained working with Reinhardt stood him in good stead. It was these very skills that he offered when applying for directorial positions in Polish theatre. As early as 1910, Ordyński made use of his knowledge and experience gained during his internship with Reinhardt. In February 1910, he briefly went to Kraków to assist in directing a production of George Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara*. He received the manuscript of this play from Reinhardt, translated it into Polish himself, and sent it to Ludwik Solski, then the director of the Municipal Theatre in Kraków. Maksymilian Węgrzyn was due to direct this play and sought help from Ordyński, who came from Berlin to assist him. Ordyński also helped to bring Frank Wedekind's *Spring Awakening*, a play that had already been performed for several seasons at Reinhardt's Kammerspiele, to the Polish stage (Taborski 1983a). It was clear from early on that, despite Ordyński's emigrant status, Polish theatre was one of his main interests. He could,

<sup>12</sup>For an example of naturalism on the American stage, see David Belasco.

therefore, act as a mediator or middleman<sup>13</sup> between Reinhardt's European work and the Polish theatre. Before this could happen, Ordyński took full advantage of the opportunities offered him by Reinhardt. He thought that Reinhardt's brand would bring him success in Poland, but things turned out differently.

Already in April 1910, Ordyński sent a letter from Moscow to Józef Kotarbiński, then literary director of Teatr Rozmaitości in Warsaw:<sup>14</sup>

It seems to me that the Warsaw theater may need such a person and can make use of it. I want to take a position where my work and, if necessary, my abilities can find the right expression. I consider this my duty as a Pole. Only when it becomes apparent in Poland that they do not want to benefit from my good intentions, I will go to the Germans or elsewhere. (Ordyński, cited in Taborski 1983a, 73–74)

From this letter, we can infer that Ordyński already considered himself a highly educated director who could devote himself to independent work in Warsaw. He probably was not yet sure about further collaboration with Reinhardt (they would only sign a one-season contract the following September<sup>15</sup>). We can assume this since Ordyński would once again seek employment in Polish theatre the following year, this time in Kraków. Jan Michalik included a letter from Ordyński to the then president of Krakow, Juliusz Leo, in *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, with extensive commentary (1989). Ordyński evidently regarded his emigration merely as a transitional state of sorts. He openly stated that working abroad was better for him financially, but '[...] feels a duty to [my] own people. If I know

<sup>13</sup> Here, I understand the term middleman in accordance with the concept of *Kulturtransfer* by M. Espagne and M. Werner. In their programmatic text (1985), the authors draw attention to the identification of a group responsible for transferring cultural content or objects. These are the so-called *Vermittler*. They particularly ascribed such a role to migrants (M. Espagne, M. Werner, 'Deutsch-französischer Kulturtransfer im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Zu einem neuen interdisziplinären Forschungsprogramm des C.N.R.S', *Francia*, 1985, no. 13, 502–510).

<sup>14</sup> The letter can be found in the collections of the Polish National Library. The fragment of the letter was quoted by Taborski in an article published in *Przegląd Humanistyczny*.

<sup>15</sup> On 1 September 1910, the Deutsches Theater entered into a contract with Ordyński for presumably only one season. Only the contract from 1912 (a document preserved in collection of M. Szydłowska) is available. This was an agreement regarding the assumption of the position of director and official in Reinhardt's enterprise (Direktionsbeamten). The contract was signed for three seasons with a monthly salary of 550 Marks in the first year, 650 Marks in the second year, and 750 Marks in the third year.

something, if I can achieve something, I would like to serve my country and my city's artistic culture with this knowledge and experience' (Ordyński, cited in Michalik 1989, 172–173). Ordyński's request was not positively received by the municipal authorities, and he was denied employment in the Krakow theatre. The official reason for this were high financial demands: Ordyński asked for, among other things, 800 krone in the first year of work, while the Kraków theatre paid about 500 krone at that time. Just a year later, the director of the Theatre Ludwig Solski employed Tadeusz Pawlikowski as the chief director with a salary of 800 krone! (Michalik 1989)

A key reason for Ordyński's exclusion from the social order of the Polish theatre was the fact that he identified with the 'Polish nation' and constantly sought a position in a renowned Polish theatre, while the local theatrical scene considered him to be an ally of Germany (which was not a good recommendation during the partitions). Evidence of this would be the aforementioned letter from E.G. Craig, in which Craig described Ordyński as an ally to the group of German thieves, adding, through Craig's own conflict with Reinhardt, a negative judgment. It should also be noted that Leon Schiller himself was familiar with Reinhardt's work, but chose Craig, not Reinhardt as his mentor, which testified to Ordyński's close relationship with the German theatre. Ordyński's chances of obtaining a position in the Warsaw theatre were also harmed by worsening policies of Germanization and their consequences, which were becoming a concern in all the partitions.

In 1901–1902, a widely commented-on strike by students took place at the Katholische Volksschule in the town of Września. The strike was directed against the Germanization of schools, particularly the requirement to teach religion in the German language. The brutal restrictions and persecution of the participants in this protest did little to calm the situation. Resistance against Germanization also increased in the Russia-controlled Kingdom of Poland. Henryk Sienkiewicz wrote in 1906 in an open letter to the King of Prussia, Wilhelm II:

In this matter, you, Your Majesty, will be the best judge. For now, please look into the eyes of this terrible truth that emanates from the state's treatment of the Poles and, though suppressed, erupts like fire from beneath the ground. Here are millions of people, over whom Providence commanded You to watch, feeling under Your rule and the governance of Your ministers more unfortunate than ever before. (1912, 223)

In light of these events, all manifestations of German culture were seen as part of the Kulturkampf. The Warsaw audience paid little attention to the artistic significance of the German performances. As early as 1885, they refused to watch the performances of the renowned European ensemble of Prince George von Meiningen because of the tense relations between the occupied nation and the occupiers. There was no tolerance for the art of the occupier, regardless of the fact that the aforementioned ensemble was taking part in one of the greatest theatre reforms in Europe. The situation repeated itself when Max Reinhardt's ensemble was scheduled to come to Warsaw in 1912.<sup>16</sup> The policies of the occupying states, the intensifying wave of brutal Germanization, and the growing power of Prussia led to increased feelings of hostility as well as boycotts of German industrial products and art. Reinhardt's work was well-known and commented upon in the Polish lands primarily due to the relative proximity to Berlin and frequent communication from Berlin-based correspondents, including Arnold Szyfman,<sup>17</sup> who published favourable remarks about the activities of this director in his column on foreign theatre in the journal *Krytyka* between 1904 and 1906. The boycott of the Warsaw performances came as a shock to Reinhardt himself, who explained in a letter to *Kurier Warszawski*. 'Stunned [...] I declare that any political ambition is far from me, and I am guided solely by art. I only wish to present *Oedipus Rex* in my own production with the full force of my theatre'<sup>18</sup> (*Kurier Warszawski*, 1912, no. 120, 1). The letter was published on the first page of the popular periodical and was commented upon by the theatre critic Władysław Rabski:

But here comes Mr. Reinhardt to the Polish capital to present his *Oedipus* in the German language, and we Poles, against everything we have written about his art, must firmly say that in Warsaw, we cannot welcome him as a guest of honour. Our *proverb* *Gość w dom, Bóg w dom* [A guest in the house,

<sup>16</sup> Ordyński was travelling with the *Sumurun* team in the United Kingdom and the United States at that time.

<sup>17</sup> Arnold Szyfman was a theatre director and stage director. He studied in Berlin between 1903 and 1904 and documented his experiences with the local theatre scene in correspondence published in the Kraków press (including *Nova Reforma*, *Czas* and *Krytyka*). Between 1906 and 1908, he collaborated with the Warsaw weekly magazine *Świat*, where he wrote about E.G. Craig and S. Wyspiański.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Kurier Warszawski* 1912, no. 120; Roman Taborski, 'Z dziejów recepcji Maxa Reinhardta w okresie Młodej Polski' in *Wśród mitów teatralnych Młodej Polski*, Kraków 1983a, 99.

God in the house] falls silent where a Prussian crosses the threshold of our humble abode. A Prussian in the house, an enemy in the house... No compromises, no subtle casuistry! Whether it's a German with a sword or a lute, they are the enemy! (*Kurier Warszawski*, 1912, no. 120, 2)

The following days saw the publication of similar articles calling for a boycott of Reinhardt's performances, and, as a result, most newspapers did not print advertisements or reviews of Reinhardt's *Oedipus*. Ordyński also became embroiled in the matter despite not being in Warsaw at the time. Kazimierz Ehrenberg, editor at *Kurier Poranny*, condemned the backlash against Reinhardt and wrote: 'It should be noted that Reinhardt himself is not Prussian, that there is a young Pole [Ryszard Ordyński] in his directorial team, and that his most distinguished artist is Italian' ('Moissi as Oedipus' *Kurier Poranny*, 1912, no. 126). Theatre historian Roman Taborski believes that the influence of Max Reinhardt's theatre on the theatres of Warsaw and Kraków was palpable (Taborski 1983b, 111). However, this was an ambivalent relationship; while certain scenic and technical solutions were appreciated, Reinhardt was criticized for the 'emancipation of theatre from literature' (Jasińska 1978, 230–231).

Due to his status as an emigrant and the several years during which he collaborated with Reinhardt, Ordyński was excluded from the Polish theatre. He was viewed as a potential threat who would introduce certain patterns and trends, or simply as an unwelcome competitor for other directors of Warsaw or Kraków theatres. Even his American achievements at the Met were forgotten in Poland, as stated, for example, by contemporary music critic Jacek Marczewski in the article *Alfabet polskiej opery: O jak Ordyński Ryszard, reżyser zapomniany* (2017).

Returning to other cultural transfer factors, apart from circumstance, Ordyński also failed as a mediator who could have potentially brought the style of Reinhardt's staging to Polish theatre. In the end, it was not he but Leon Schiller who was dubbed the Polish Reinhardt. Citing Karol Frycz, Małgorzata Leyko references a theatrical entrepreneur (clueless to the Polish theatre scene) who asked Leon Schiller<sup>19</sup> 'Vous êtes le Reinhardt poloniais?'<sup>20</sup> In this context, not only is Schiller's lack of response significant, but so is Frycz's verdict of Reinhardt's theatre: '[Schiller has been] the final antithesis of businessmanship and mercantile talent'—this, of

<sup>19</sup> Karol Frycz (1877–1963) was an artist, production designer, and director.

<sup>20</sup> The name of the entrepreneur is unknown.

course, referred to Reinhardt's enterprise (Leyko 2023a, 59). Living abroad, Ordyński remained somewhat disconnected from the contemporary Polish theatre ecosystem and was thus unable to significantly affect it.

Ordyński returned to Warsaw after the end of World War I and after Poland regained its independence. This time, he was identified as an experienced director and entrepreneur in America, and he invested in the creation of the Towarzystwo Teatrów Stołecznych (Capital Theatres Society) in Warsaw, a decision which would later turn out to be rather unfortunate. It was a large-scale undertaking conceived as a nationwide network of theatres. Besides Ordyński, the founding committee included Ludwik Heller, Marian Biliński, Jan Drozdowski Franciszek Jaroszyński, Kazimierz Krechowiecki, Prince Andrzej Lubomirski and Count Stanisław Adam Stadnicki. Heller became the administrative director, while Ordyński took on the role of artistic director. The company owned, among others, the renovated Teatr Nowości (opened on 23 October 1921). However, in the spring of 1922—as Edward Krasieński writes—‘Heller and Ordyński’s venture was falling apart (actors were receiving only half of their dues). Ordyński resigned early in the year due to artistic misunderstandings with the management’ (1976, 173). The society, or rather the company, aimed to build and manage a network of private theatres that could compete with Warsaw’s municipal theatres, such as Teatr Polski. Ultimately, the initiative proved to be on too large a scale, and the first years (1921–1922) following Polish independence were a challenging and economically unstable period during which state structures were only beginning to take shape (for example, the National Theatre was only opened in October 1924). Krasieński notes that the nerve-wracking atmosphere prevailing during this period drained the energy and wasted the time of directors, artists, and critics alike. (1976, 17) This included Ordyński, who decided once again to emigrate to the United States, where he mainly focused on the art of film.

## CONCLUSION

Migration researcher Thomas Nail, utilizing Bauman’s essay on ‘tourists’ and ‘vagabonds’, points out that gains from migration are always associated with some form of loss. This loss can be either individual and related to the migrant themselves or broader and societal, which is more difficult to evaluate. Among the theatrical artists who migrated at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, two extreme



reactions are observed. The first of these is acceptance in the home country despite migration, as was, for instance, seen in the case of actress Helena Modrzejewska. Even though she emigrated to the United States, she was considered a star of Polish theatre and was applauded during her numerous guest performances, leaving a lasting memory among her compatriots. Here, I analysed a different type of reaction, one of exclusion or oblivion. Such was the reaction not only to Ordynski, but also, for example, to Ryszard Bolesławski, a director educated at the Moscow Art Theatre. Bolesławski left Poland in 1921 and soon achieved spectacular success in America as a director, acting teacher of the Stanislavsky Technique, and filmmaker. He was only remembered in the history of Polish theatre during a conference dedicated to him in 2016.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, Ordynski made his mark in the history of Polish culture as a film director. The online database of Polish cinema lists his direction of twelve Polish films, two film scripts, and other accomplishments in the art of film. To trace his theatrical achievements, one must delve into volumes of *Pamiętnik Teatralny* or his own memoirs published in 1957, *Z mojej włóczęgi* (*From My Wandering*). Many copies of his memoirs from the original print run of over 10,000 copies remain untouched to this day.

Translated by Katarzyna Kołodziejczyk.

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<sup>21</sup> In 2018, Akademia Teatralna in Warsaw published a biography *Ryszard Bolesławski. Jego twórczość i jego czasy* (Ryszard Bolesławski. His art and his times), edited by Barbara Osterloff. I would also like to highlight an article by Dobrochna Ratajczakowa published in the monthly *Teatr* magazine (no. 10/2019), in which the author very scrupulously recalls all the tiniest notes, memories, and articles about Bolesławski, trying to prove that he was present in the Polish scholarly and journalistic discourse. However, in the end, she gives her text the title 'Rzecz o twórcy odrzuconym i możliwościach zmarnowanych' (A Tale of a Rejected Creator and Missed Opportunities).

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# The Times and Toils of Moyshe Hurwitz

*Ruthie Abeliovich*

The Yiddish satiric periodical *Der Kibitzer* publicized the opening of the new theatre season in September 1910 with a provocative caricature by Zuni Maud, showing a poor Jewish family in front of a theatre (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> The father and mother, accompanied by six children of different ages, are drawn against the backdrop of the familiar streets and buildings of New York City. Their arms are packed with belongings, each carrying according to their relative size and strength. Their many bags, sacks and trollies cast them as migrants in search of a new home, which, as the drawing insinuates, they hope to find in the Yiddish theatre. They stand in front of the theatre, with tacit smiles, as if they had reached a ‘promised land.’ Underneath the drawing, appears the Yiddish caption: ‘His majesty “Moyshe” with his majestic family move from the “Summer Palace” to the “Winter Palace”—from the park into the theatre.’ Moyshe—a condescending, pejorative nickname for the low-class frivolous Jewish audiences

<sup>1</sup> On Zuni Maud, see Portnoy 1999, 115–134.

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sophisticated theatregoers; it was them, rather than the provincial Jewish community of Iași, who initially formed Goldfaden's audience, and gave rise to his growing theatre enterprise (2019, 47–48). Goldfaden launched a prolific Yiddish theatre scene in Iași that mostly staged musical comic plays, melodramas and operettas. Soon after his enterprise proved to be successful, he faced competition. Commercial Yiddish theatre companies were established, and Yiddish playwrights and entrepreneurs strove to duplicate and further develop Goldfaden's theatrical formula, gradually making inroads into the growing Yiddish popular theatre scene.

After the end of the Russo-Turkish war, Goldfaden and his competitors travelled eastwards, mostly along the urban centres of the Russian Empire. They arrived in Odessa, making it a temporary home before Tsar Alexander III banned Yiddish language theatre activity within the boundaries of the Empire (in autumn 1883).<sup>2</sup> They then roamed west through the cities of central Europe for a few years, before crossing the ocean to settle in New York City, turning it into the capital of Yiddish popular theatre. During the following years, these wandering Jewish performers metamorphosed into modern-theatre transmigrants, travelling back and forth between continents, connecting Jewish diasporas under a shared repertoire. By the end of the nineteenth century, Yiddish theatre had, thus, evolved from a regional phenomenon into a transnational entertainment network.<sup>3</sup> It transformed traditional Jewish performances into modern entertainment, rendering migration and its repercussions a salient aesthetic and thematic element (Stern 2011; Seigel 2020, 109–124).

At the turn of the twentieth century, 'Professor' Moyshe (Ish-Halevi) Hurwitz was one of the key theatre impresarios and playwrights of the Yiddish popular theatre scene in New York. His times and toils—not to mention his theatrical oeuvre—are paradigmatic of the early Yiddish theatre. Hurwitz was a man of his age; his migration route and theatre entrepreneurship correlate with the traveling impulse of turn-of-the-century European theatre impresarios and actors. Like Anglo-American actor and theatre manager Maurice E. Bandmann (1872–1922), Hurwitz created a manager-centred business. Like his European peers, his productions focused mainly on melodramatic operas and comic operettas, performed by itinerant artists in Europe and the US (Balme 2019; Schweitzer 2015;

<sup>2</sup> On the ban on Yiddish theatre in Russia, see Quint 2019, 180–182.

<sup>3</sup> On the transnational perspective for the study of modern Yiddish theatre, see Caplan 2014, 296–317; Warnke 2013, 23–41; Markenson 2020, 455–476; Nahshon 2009.

Senelick 2017, 22–36). Yet, unlike the European scene, his theatre was unique in its appeal to a relatively homogeneous target market of Yiddish-speaking migrants.

This chapter discusses the creative models developed by Hurwitz in his theatre and entrepreneurship as a manifestation of the link between commercial Jewish theatre and the mass Jewish migration movement. I shall focus on Hurwitz's emigration, his business initiatives, theatre productions and influence on the Yiddish popular theatre scene in order to understand how his theatre shaped, mirrored and affected the formation of migratory communities, based upon co-presence, a global musical and dramatic repertoire, and shared social habits.

Despite the enormous popularity that Hurwitz's works enjoyed at the turn of the twentieth century, his performances were heavily criticized. Among Jewish elite and intellectual circles, Hurwitz's theatre was synonymous with *shund* (literally 'trash'), and was ultimately cast outside the Jewish theatre canon.<sup>4</sup> While the dramas of respected playwrights—such as Jacob Gordin or Avrom Goldfaden—have been widely acknowledged and studied, the dramatic creation of Hurwitz was dismissed as the output of 'baking' plays, referring to the technique of concocting dramas under time pressure, by adding a Yiddish 'flavour' to existing European plays (Sandrow 1996, 105). In memoirs, Yiddish theatre chronicles and contemporary newspaper articles, Hurwitz is widely referred to as a theatre producer geared towards commercial profit, lacking professional integrity or artistic merit (See, e.g., Quint 2019, 119–121; Sandrow 1996, 104–108).

Although a plethora of archival material from Hurwitz's theatre is at our disposal, surprisingly, there is no personal archive, memoirs, or an autobiography. Thus, Hurwitz's 'voice' remains muted. We do not know what his motivations and inspirations were. More importantly, his story has been told and retold mostly by his harsh critics, none of whom addresses his entrepreneurship as a significant cultural or artistic phenomenon. The most extensive texts about Hurwitz were composed by Zalmen Zylbercweig, author of *The Lexicon of Yiddish Theatre*, who wrote a long entry on Hurwitz by compiling biographical accounts. One of his key sources is Bernard Gorin's *History of Yiddish Theatre*. A Russian-born Jewish playwright and journalist, Gorin provides anecdotes about Hurwitz's activity and scandals, mostly from his time in New York. Both Gorin and Zylbercweig present Hurwitz as a greedy, shrewd businessman,

<sup>4</sup> On Yiddish theatre critics, see Warnke 2003, 201–216.

a maker of worthless lowbrow theatre. In the following, I draw on these two sources, as well as on newspaper reviews and articles, dramatic scripts, and theatre ephemera, in order to explore the ways whereby migration shaped Hurwitz's theatre-making, and to reexamine the significance of his oeuvre vis-à-vis the community-building processes of Jewish migrants in New York City. In doing so, I follow recent studies on Yiddish theatre that critically reconsider the term '*shund*' and acknowledge the central role it played in the cultural and artistic arenas of the Jewish masses at the turn of the twentieth century (See, e.g., Berkowitz 2003; Berkowitz et al. 2023; Zaritt n.d.).

What can Hurwitz's brief and forgotten career tell us about the meaning of theatre to migrants? As I show in the following, Hurwitz's theatre-making translated the experience of migration and displacement into a creative embodied practice. Hurwitz shaped his theatre according to the social configurations mobilized to organize Jewish migrant communities in New York. By fictionalizing and performing the social structures of Jewish migrants in the city, Hurwitz bonded his spectators both to the theatre and to one another. Through his artistic practices, he transmuted 'homeless' migrant audiences into active participants within a 'theatre community.'

### INROADS INTO YIDDISH THEATRE

Moyshe (Ish-Halevi) Hurwitz was born in 1844 in Stanislav, Eastern Galicia, to a Hasidic family. He benefited from a well-rounded education that included both religious and general studies, becoming proficient in German and Hebrew, in addition to the Russian and Romanian languages spoken around him. When he was eighteen years old, he travelled away from his home to become a Hebrew teacher and a publisher of the Hebrew-Romanian newspaper *Di tsayt* ('The Time'), which appeared for a short time in 1871. He then moved to Bucharest, where he was briefly employed as a professor of geography at a local university. During that time, he took part in a translation of the Bible into Romanian and, at some point, served as the headmaster of a private school in Bucharest, until he was fired (Zylbercweig 1931, 1: 591).

Financial distress led Hurwitz to convert to Christianity and become a missionary. Adopting a public Christian identity, Hurwitz's 'new' persona was supposed to boost his professional prospects and social status by enabling him to earn his living from broader social circles. However, when



he wished to join Goldfaden's newly established Yiddish theatre venture in 1877, he was rejected on the grounds of his work as a missionary. Hurwitz did not give up. He organized a performance at the local tavern in which he publicly declared his return to Judaism and reaffirmed his Jewish identity. The few peddlers and passers-by who served as his audience surely knew that he was acting. This was a performance and a path into the world of show business—a rite of passage into the theatre (See Perlmutter and Mestel 1952, 66–72; Zylbercweig 1931, 1: 591–605; Gorin 1918, vol. 2). As this anecdote reveals, Hurwitz could only gain access to the theatre world after having undergone the full experience of identity transformation: from Judaism to Christianity and back. His performance of religious transformation was intended to make him seem trustworthy. In effect, it established his persona as malleable and fundamentally theatrical. Hurwitz's return to Judaism was thus not a moment of spiritual revelation, but of self-creation. Through his personal public performance of conversion, Hurwitz made a claim vis-à-vis a faith experience by means of theatrical make-believe.

Hurwitz launched his theatre at this Bucharest tavern on April 24, 1877, offering free beer to whomever bought a ticket. Throughout the subsequent four decades, Hurwitz was constantly inventing new marketing methods that would help him draw new audiences into his theatre. As Quint points out, his fierce competition with Goldfaden forced him out of Bucharest, to roam across the Romanian provinces with his ragtag troupe (2019, 119–121).<sup>5</sup> They travelled to Galicia, and from there to Odessa where they performed at the Mariinsky Theatre.<sup>6</sup> Then they travelled west, through Galicia, to Vienna, whereby they staged performances at the Ringtheater, a few months before the breakout of the great fire that destroyed it (8 December 1881). Vienna's theatre critics, however, showed little enthusiasm for Hurwitz's theatre and the troupe roamed back east.<sup>7</sup> Upon returning to Budapest, Hurwitz was arrested for swindling the

<sup>5</sup> Among the actors working with Hurwitz during his roaming years in Europe were Isroel Gordner, Sigmund Mogulesco, Aba Sheongold, Feivle Friedman, his daughter Charlotte (Shifra) Hurwitz and her future husband Caesar (Betsalel) Greenberg.

<sup>6</sup> On the Yiddish theatre at the Mariinsky Theatre in Odessa, see Quint 2019, 122–123, 110–112; On Jewish cultural activity in Odessa, see Zipperstein 1985.

<sup>7</sup> A review from Hurwitz's performance in Vienna is quoted in *The Guest Performances of Moses Horowitz's Theater Troupe in Vienna, December 13 to December 16, 1880*. Archival documents compiled by Fritz Neubauer on the occasion of Moyshe Hurwitz' Family Reunion on August 14, 2006 in New York City.

money invested in his theatre, escaped to Constantinople, and from there to London, before eventually settling in New York in 1886.<sup>8</sup>

Hurwitz's convoluted migration route would play a central role in his later theatre creation and entrepreneurship. As we shall see, dramatic themes reflecting the lives and hardships of displaced people resurface in various facets of his work in the United States. Indeed, after Hurwitz arrived in New York, the theatre he created changed. He still produced Yiddish translations of European drama, historical and biblical operettas remained among his most profitable output, but his migration routes and detours left traces on the leitmotifs of his plays, as well as on his theatre practice, as can be seen in his dramatic texts and performances.<sup>9</sup> *Lebensbilder*—a dramatic genre that focused on scenes from Jewish daily reality—entered his theatre to provide an arena for reflection. Through Hurwitz' performances, Jewish theatregoers—Yiddish-speaking migrants, mostly from Eastern Europe—could better understand their new homeland, its norms, behavioural conventions, financial and social potential (Warnke 2013, 23–41). In New York, Hurwitz created a theatre that tapped into the emotions of the Jewish public. In his performances, Jewish migratory audiences could have a good laugh at the expense of their own cultural mismatch, their blunders, and confusions in their new living surroundings. From this perspective, Hurwitz can be considered a theatre migrant not only because he crossed the Atlantic on his route to America, but also because he created a theatre in which migrants performed plays about migrants for migrants.

In New York, Hurwitz's thespian entrepreneurship grew massively. He began to produce theatre at the Romanian Opera House, gradually expanding his business to other locales. From the end of the nineteenth century and into the first decade of the twentieth century, Hurwitz dominated the New York Yiddish theatre scene. He served first as prompter, then as resident dramatist and business manager at the main and largest Yiddish theatres operating in New York. For nearly three decades, Hurwitz wrote a new piece almost every week, staging mostly musical theatre. Most of his productions had relatively short runs, which exerted taxing

<sup>8</sup> At the turn of the century, New York's immigrant leisure scene brimmed with theatrical activity. Various groups of immigrants—from Germany, Italy, and Eastern Europe—operated lively cultural arenas, bearing thematic and stylistic affinities which connected them to the modern urban fabric of the city. See Haenni 2008; Most 2013, 10 and 21.

<sup>9</sup> Zylberweig mentions many, although not all, of Hurwitz's theatre production in his Lexicon, see 1931, 1: 591–605.

demands on him to constantly produce performances with an original dramatic libretto and music, within a very short time. In an informed process of translation of familiar plots, appropriation of earlier sources, imitation and adaptation of European music and drama, Hurwitz created a distinctly Jewish body of work that established a dialogue with its European and American popular culture counterparts.

One of the first notable performances he created was *The Tisza Esler Process*, a musical drama written by Hurwitz back in Romania, narrating the murder of a young local Christian girl in Hungary in 1882, described in the Jewish press as a blood libel, as Jews were falsely accused of having executed her.<sup>10</sup> This eight-act performance included many improvised scenes and was staged along two consecutive evenings. Imagine the audience attending this drama—most, if not all of them, Jewish migrants—once again bonding around a painful affair of antisemitic prosecution, still fresh in their memory. They are already in America, with no immediate threats or sanctions hanging over their heads, yet the age-old fear and victimhood triggered under the guise of entertainment enables them to feel, if only briefly, for the timespan of the theatre performance, a familiar sense of shared fate and belonging to a cohesive community. The fashioning of a theatre community through shared social drama and the gearing of theatre for worldmaking were a central motivation behind Hurwitz's undertaking. To this end, he developed schemes and social models that hooked Jewish migrants onto his theatre, encouraging them to become involved in the creation of a Yiddish theatre community.

### THEATRE AS WORLDMAKING: 'DOVID'S HARP'

Like most of his theatre audiences, Hurwitz migrated from Europe with the hope of making a fresh start in *di goldene medine* ('the golden land'). Tailored to fit Jewish immigrants in New York, his theatre depended upon this very specific audience to sponsor its activities. Within the booming competitive Yiddish theatre business in New York City, the zeal and enthusiasm of the Yiddish-speaking public fell short of securing Hurwitz a stable income. Hurwitz's main rival was Joseph Lateiner (1853–1935), a playwright and theatre producer who was constantly outshining him. Like Hurwitz, Lateiner migrated to the United States in 1884, following a

<sup>10</sup>On the historical Tiszaeszlár affair, see Hadler 1980; Nemes 2007, 20–44; Kövér 2014, 749–786.

short successful theatre career in Eastern Europe.<sup>11</sup> Lateiner and Hurwitz were struggling to attract the same audience, by way of a brutal competition, including mutual public defamations and plagiarism. As Nahma Sandrow points out, when Hurwitz staged the operetta *King Solomon*, Lateiner staged *The Trial of Solomon*; when Hurwitz staged *Don Joseph Abravanel*, Lateiner staged *Don Yitzhak Abravanel* (1996, 108). This rivalry prompted Hurwitz to search for new marketing strategies, and new ideas for performances that would, once again, draw the masses to his theatre, whilst also catering to their new needs.

Hurwitz came up with such a business strategy when he turned his attention to the Jewish immigrant societies. During the first years of the twentieth century, New York saw the growth of *Landsmanshaftn*—Jewish philanthropic organizations based on their members' shared roots in an East-European city or town—founded by Jewish migrants from specific towns or regions who supported other Jewish migrants from the same area. The *Landsmanschaft*, as Daniel Soyer explains, were associations of transplanted natives of the same East-European towns, that offered a system of mutual aid, enabling Jewish migrants to meet basic financial needs and enjoy a supportive social community.<sup>12</sup> Each society afforded its members a set of discounted services, including medical care by an affiliated doctor, reimbursement for wages lost during illness, a form of life insurance, undertaking the cost of funerals and burial expenses for the cemetery of the society and, sometimes, shares in real-estate properties around the city. In addition, these philanthropic organizations offered its members casual and formal social events, such as balls sponsored by the society, concerts and performances, picnics, and outdoor trips (Soyer 1997; Soyer 1986, 5–24). Importantly, the *Landsmanshaftn* enabled migrants to continue their communal affiliation with their origin community, while forging strong social bonds in their new home.

Theatre performances, known as 'benefits,' were an important part of the social activities of the *Landsmanshaftn*. According to Soyer, both the societies and the theatres profited from these events, with the society promoting a major social event—an activity planned months ahead—a venue for the distribution of honours, and—if all went well—accruing some revenue. All members of the society were bound to purchase tickets for the

<sup>11</sup> For more on Joseph Lateiner, see Zylberweig 1931, 1: 964–990.

<sup>12</sup> For studies about Jewish immigration in New York City at the turn of the twentieth century, see Rock et al. 2012; Polland and Soyer 2012, vol. 2.

theatre performances, whether they wanted to attend or not, and the profit would be geared to the benefit of the guild. The theatre, in turn, received a substantial contribution, as well as an audience for its performances. In August 1892, a decade after the first Yiddish stage production in the US, the benefit system had become a mainstay of the theatre. On the evenings of the first four weekdays, the Yiddish theatre audience mainly comprised *Landsmanshaftn* members. In these evenings, the play was not *the thing*, as the audience was mainly geared towards the social event (James 1907, 222–232). Key members of the society would deliver speeches; the society member who sold the largest number of tickets would be acclaimed, and the audience would bathe in an overall feeling of smugness and solidarity, on account of its ability to assist and contribute to the community.

The concept and system of the *Landsmanshaft* provided Hurwitz the inspiration and financial scheme for his own theatre entrepreneurship (Blank *Forverts* 1928, 6). As a concept, it offered a creative model that derived its social import from the ways whereby it was implemented within the Jewish migrant community. Worldmaking—the creation of social venues, on the theatre stage and beyond—was a central part of Hurwitz’s theatrical entrepreneurship, enabling him to reflect upon changing social structures. As a financial system, the *Landsmanshaftn* afforded the business scheme for Hurwitz’s new theatre. He established a theatre organization called ‘Dovid’s Harp’ with a fixed membership scheme: one dollar was to be paid in advance; then, an addition of two dollars per month would grant membership and tickets for performances in Hurwitz’s theatre. In the long run, the money invested in the theatre was also supposed to facilitate a sort of life insurance: when the member passed away, his family would receive the down payment plus its additional accumulated interest.

‘Dovid’s Harp’ set up a model premised upon the networking of Jewish immigrants, brought together around a focal point: the theatre. The scheme allowed its members to participate in the new social sphere, helping them to attain a public sense of belonging, as well as foster a personal reflection upon their individual identities. It reproduced an organizational structure that was familiar to local migrants, enabling Hurwitz to manipulate the migrant social scene by taking advantage of his audience’s skill as vicarious participants. By doing so, his theatre opened up alternative forms of engagement, offering audiences the possibility to fictionalize their reality through reflection. ‘Dovid’s Harp’ simulated for its audience their

connection to theatre, based on their social identity, and marked the theatre as an arena of *belonging*.

Hurwitz focused his intensive marketing of ‘Dovid’s Harp’ on the *Landsmanshaftn*. In order to recruit members for his initiative, he put on a show of his own, in which he would make a heart-rending speech followed by a choir singing a chapter from Psalms. The audience, as Zylbercweig writes, lightened their wallets and generously invested in this initiative. In a short period of time, Hurwitz managed to sell over 900 memberships of ‘Dovid’s Harp.’ By way of celebration, he organized an opening gala at the newly inaugurated Poole’s theatre, located on Eighth Street and Second Avenue.<sup>13</sup> A festive parade took place on East Broadway, attracting thousands to the surrounding streets.<sup>14</sup> The event reached its apex when Hurwitz joined the march, carried on a canopy by two women garbed in white dresses. The parade was accompanied by music, leading the large crowd into the theatre, as Hurwitz was thus transported onto the stage. The streets were packed with Jewish theatregoers, flocking to the Jewish quarters of lower Manhattan. During these moments, the immigrant community celebrated going to the theatre by publicly performing their grand entrance. Traversing the streets of the city and over the threshold of the theatre, they transformed from individuals into a theatrical community, organized according to Hurwitz’s ‘Dovid’s Harp.’ After that day, as Sholem Perlmutter notes, Hurwitz was dubbed ‘Professor’ (Perlmutter *Forverts* 1946, 7).

Hurwitz’s theatre created a financial and thespian model that fused artistic and social arenas. He entwined his actors and audience with the theatre by appealing to their shared migratory identity. Dramaturgies of social organization, public building and a sense of personal collective belonging were thus practiced within and outside Hurwitz’s theatre. By doing so, he embraced an inclusive approach to performance that dramatized the social structure of the Jewish migrant community and shaped its role in structuring its cultural realms. He replicated the spectatorial behaviours and habitus of his audience to theatrical enactment.

<sup>13</sup> Poole’s Theatre, later known as Union Theatre, contained approximately 1200 seats. Its opening marks the heyday of Yiddish theatre in New York, underscoring the need to cater to large Yiddish-speaking audiences. See Seiger 1960, 264–265.

<sup>14</sup> For accounts of the parade in the daily newspapers, see Hayehudi Yidishe gazette 1888, 4; *Blank Forverts* 1928, 6.

‘Dovid’s Harp’ hinged upon the professional collaboration between Hurwitz—who acted as the business manager of this undertaking—and two of the greatest luminaries of the Yiddish theatre: Moyshe Heine-Haimovitch (Maurice Heine), who served as director, and Sigmund Mogulesco, who was in charge of the artistic aspects of the theatre.<sup>15</sup> These two towering theatre comedians drew the audience to ‘Dovid’s Harp’ theatre productions (see, e.g., ‘advertisement,’ *Der Folksadvokat* 1888b, 4). The first shows staged the popular Yiddish repertoire, featuring musical and dramatic excerpts from *Shmendrik* and *Two Kuni Lemel* by Goldfaden, while omitting his name (credit and presumably also his royalties) from the billboards advertising these performances.<sup>16</sup> Goldfaden, who was, at the time, struggling to find work in the city, did not take this sitting down and published an open letter in the daily newspaper *Der folksadvokat*, pointing out what he termed a ‘miserable mistake.’ In response, a letter on behalf of ‘Dovid’s Harp’ was published, claiming that both *Shmendrik* and *Two Kuni Lemel* were heavily adapted to cater to the artistic style of the theatre and the local taste of the audience.<sup>17</sup> This public clash demonstrates ‘Dovid’s Harp’ professional practice and ethical standards: It prioritized pleasing the public taste over professional integrity, and trampled on issues relating to authorship and property rights.

#### NEW ARRIVALS: *EMIGRANTEN OYS RUSLAND*

One of the first notable plays performed within the framework of ‘Dovid’s Harp’ was *Emigranten oys Rusland oder, Der griner pedler (Immigrants from Russia or the Greenhorn Peddler)*—described by the press as a ‘contemporary comedy with music in five acts.’ It premiered at Poole’s Theatre on September 19, 1888, starring Mogulesco and Heine.<sup>18</sup> Reviews of the performance mention the play’s striking resemblance to Lateiner’s play

<sup>15</sup> See newspaper advertisement in *Der Folksadvokat* 1888c, 4. On Moyshe Heine-Haimovitch (Maurice Heine) see Zylberweig 1931, 1: 608–609; On Sigmund Mogulesco see Slobin 1982, 32–36; Zylberweig, 2: 1180–1208.

<sup>16</sup> *Shmendrik* and *Di tsvey Kuni-Lemel* are two of Goldfaden’s early comic operettas, which were box-office blockbusters in Eastern Europe.

<sup>17</sup> An open letter written by Avrom Goldfaden, see *Der Folksadvokat* 1888, 6; and a reply by Yisroel Ben Oylem, see *Der Folksadvokat* 1888, 6.

<sup>18</sup> See the newspaper announcement about the performance review: <https://www.nli.org.il/he/newspapers/flkadv/1888/09/19/01/article/18.1>

*Emigratsion nokh amerika*.<sup>19</sup> Lateiner's production premiered at the Oriental Theatre on the Lower East Side on the grand opening of its third season—October 13, 1886.<sup>20</sup> Other accounts attribute the play to Lateiner himself, arranged for the stage by Hurwitz (*Der Folksadvokat* 1888, 3). While Hurwitz's manuscript of the play was apparently not preserved, an extant copy of the promptbook of Lateiner's *Emigratsion nokh Amerika* provides clues regarding the dramatic plot of Hurwitz's performance, and its staging.<sup>21</sup>

*Emigratsion nokh Amerika* portrays the migration route of a Jewish family, from the southeastern European town of Balta (in Russia), via Constantinople (today Istanbul), to New York. The first scene of the play takes place at the home of a wealthy Jewish merchant and his family: Moshkovitch, Anna, and their young daughter Rashel. Caught in the *geist* of migration, they make plans to cross the Atlantic Ocean, yet are loath to realize them. The violent pogroms that take place in Russia during 1881–1882 strike their home and after Anna is murdered, they are compelled to migrate to America. During their journey, Rashel's music teacher and lover, Moritz, unwillingly separates from the family. They disembark in New York after a long and dreadful journey, and their new, challenging reality, does not bode well for their future. Although the play ends in a positive note, the performance brought to the fore the daily hardship of Jewish immigrants in New York, and the thwarted illusion of social mobility, triggered by migration.

The migration route depicted in the play, from Eastern Europe to the United States, was familiar to Hurwitz, Lateiner and to many members of their audiences. Representing it on the stage, however, was considered to be pioneering. According to Gorin's account—unlike previous Yiddish theatre performances staged in America, which, hitherto, mainly focused on the Jewish 'traditional' dramatic repertoire imported from Europe, staging biblical themes such as *Yosef and his Brothers* and other *purimspiel* scenarios, such as *Ester and Haman*—this drama presented a theme that

<sup>19</sup>This performance and its reviews are discussed in Seiger 1960, 237–240.

<sup>20</sup>The music for the play was composed by Joachim Kurantman, who acted as the company composer. This company also included Joseph Lateiner as dramatist and Rubens Weissman as prompter. Among the actors and actresses were Sam Adler, Morris (Heine) Haimowitz, Max Karp, Sonya Borodkin, Sophie (Karp) Goldstein, Sonya Haimowitz, Morris Silberman and Joseph Wachtel.

<sup>21</sup>A handwritten prompting notebook of Joseph Lateiner's *Emigratsion nokh Amerika* is archived at the Perlmutter collection, YIVO Archives (NYC).



related directly to the daily lives of its audiences (1918, vol. 2, 74). The reviews in the Yiddish press indicate that Lateiner aimed to achieve a sense of realism in his new play—a style that both pleased and shocked the Yiddish audiences, which had become accustomed to the epic stylized productions of the historical operettas and biblical operas. Thus, in its attempt to depict the daily lives of Jewish immigrants in the ‘New World,’ the play marked a significant milestone in the development of Yiddish theatre.

*Emigratsion nokh Amerika* dramatized many aspects familiar to the audience from their migration experience. In a review from *Di Yiddishe Gazeten*, the critic—writing under the pseudonym ‘professor’ Ehrlich—deplores the failure of the stage to reflect the Jewish daily life in New York. For instance, Ehrlich writes: ‘if Ludlow Street is depicted, should it not contain other recognizable features, besides a candy store for it to look like the real Ludlow Street?’ (1886, 7; Seiger 1960, 239) Another critic, under the pen name Sarasohn, presented the opposite view in his review of the performance published in the *Yiddishes tageblatt*, arguing that the play was too realistic, presenting too much of everyday life (1887, 4; Seiger 1960, 237–240). Taken together, we can presume that despite the lack of concrete details in the design, the performance resonated with the audiences’ daily experience, since, according to Ehrlich, ‘the faults are compensated by the excellent acting.’ Ehrlich especially mentions Heine (Haimovitch) in his role as the peddler: ‘You’ll forget your troubles and you’ll laugh at him’ (1886, 7).

The plotline of *Emigratsion nokh Amerike* reflected the transition from the old world to the new vistas of Jewish immigration: the play opens with a scene of persecution of Jews in Europe and ends with a Jewish wedding in New York. Between these two poles, the domestic melodrama unfolds. One of the highlights of the play is ‘the candy hawkers’ scene, in which two of the central protagonists, Yekel and Suny, have reached the end of their long journey from Russia to the United States. Now, in their new homeland, they become street peddlers, selling candy on Hester Street on the Lower East Side, the lively commercial centre of Jewish immigrants at the time.<sup>22</sup> Their Yiddish is interspersed with English phrases, as resounding from the slogans they shout at the passers-by: ‘Candy, candy, come here and try,’ shifting to Yiddish to complete the sentence ‘you will then

<sup>22</sup>The scene of Jewish candy vendors on Hester Street also features in Abraham Cahahn’s 1896 novella *Yekel: A Tale of the New York Ghetto*, adapted for the cinema in 1975 under the title *Hester Street* (directed by Joan Micklin Silver).

[want to] eat the entire package.’ They sell sweets on the street and discuss the bitter hardships of their new reality as migrants in the big city. The pair of peddlers reflect upon the challenges posed by the new language. When, later in the scene, they encounter Shifra—a long-time acquaintance from their Russian hometown—selling potatoes on the street, she talks to them about *lokshen* (noodles) rather than *action*. This humoristic scene was perceived, by the actors as well as the audiences, as bittersweet. Mogulesco and Heine made their insufficient grasp of English and the ensuing problems into a joke. Their humour was, thus, a form of self-reflection through which the audience could identify with and laugh, together, about their embarrassing language slipups. Moreover, this scene was played by actors—themselves migrants—before an audience comprised mostly of migrants. The stage mirrored the audience, reflecting their world while fictionalizing it. This relation between the migratory realities of the audience and the fictional constructs on the stage was decisive in rendering theatre a critical performative arena. By staging scenes whereby spectators could imagine themselves as mobile people in the new metropolis, Hurwitz’s theatre provided a social model for negotiating the new city and its inhabitants.

### THE RISE AND FALL OF MOYSHE HURWITZ

During the short time in which it operated, ‘Dovid’s Harp’ was a huge success. The theatre was bustling with activity, and money was pouring into productions, enabling Hurwitz to improve the quality of his theatre, but mostly to upgrade his own personal public performance. Leon Blank, a celebrated Yiddish theatre actor, renders a vivid description of the flashy, glittering diamonds worn by Hurwitz on his chest and signet ring, which raised eyebrows amongst his colleagues (*Forverts* 1928, 6). Actor Moyshe Simanoff, Blank records, once gazed at Hurwitz’s diamond. When Hurwitz asked him with discomfort what he was staring at, Simanoff answered: ‘I am looking at the diamond because I see in it the petticoat and small shoes deprived from my children.’ Blank’s anecdote reflects the hard feelings caused by the display of Hurwitz’s extravagance, especially against the backdrop of poverty experienced by both the actors and the audience of Yiddish theatre at the time. Hurwitz was perceived as a selfish man, exploiting his peers, and thriving at the expense of his audience and colleagues (Blank *Forverts* 1928, 6; Schurr 1888, 8; ‘Advertisement,’ *Der Folksadvokat* 1888a, 8). His success, therefore, was short-lived.

‘Dovid’s Harp’ reproduced and reenacted the *Landsmanshaftn* not only in its structure, but also in the intrigue, jealousy and niggling it ignited. Organized societies and congregations, as Abraham J. Karp maintains, served not only as sites of communal consolidation, but also as arenas for acting out interpersonal relationships and provided members with a safe haven, which enabled its members to blow off steam: ‘Strong words could be exchanged, charges brought, fines levied, sanctions imposed and then reconciliations arranged, fines rescinded, peace restored’ (1998, 32). Such bad feelings, suspicion and rivalry were soon also enacted by the leading figures and members of ‘Dovid’s Harp.’

Conflicts set off when Hurwitz realized how profitable ‘Dovid’s Harp’ was, and began claiming sole ownership of this venture, crediting himself as the driving force behind its success. Thus, soon after its establishment, on October 19, 1888, ‘Dovid’s Harp’ was dismantled (‘Notizen,’ *Der Folksadvokat* 1888, 3). Hurwitz tried to revoke the agreement with his partners in order to rake in all the profits. This resulted in a business dispute that rapidly escalated. First, Hurwitz and his former partners began to operate separately in the same theatre. This confusion in the management of the theatre caused many members of ‘Dovid’s Harp’ to leave the organisation, but not before withdrawing their money from the common fund. When all sides began bleeding cash, the dispute between Hurwitz and his business partners gained momentum, spiralling from a low-key argument into a loaded public conflict that eventually reached court, leaving Hurwitz out of the business (Schurr 1888, 8; *Der Folksadvokat* 1888, 8). The legendary ‘Professor,’ however, soon landed on his feet and made a quick return to the Yiddish theatrical milieu. He travelled to Philadelphia, where he became involved in the local Yiddish theatre scene. When he returned to New York, he resumed his activity, first at the Oriental Theatre, then, once again, at Poole’s Theatre, and later at the Thalia Theatre.

During the years in which Hurwitz was struggling to keep his head above water, his theatrical activity played a pivotal role, far beyond New York, in the transnational scene of popular Yiddish theatre. While Hurwitz focused on creating a live theatre that would cater to local Jewish migrants, his dramatic repertoire was performed on stages across Europe (mainly in Galicia and the Pale of Settlement). Images, scenarios, and songs from his performances were adapted to the European Jewish audience in a multidirectional circulatory movement that included theatre actors, musicians, and many media by-products. Sheet music from memorable musical moments of Hurwitz’s performances were sold, sound

recordings of songs performed in his operettas were widespread, and dramatic texts adapted and published. The circulation of these materials, preserved in theatre and sound archives in the United States, Europe, and Russia, attests to the wide dissemination of his work, its alterations and modes of production across continents and empires.

The broad dissemination of Hurwitz's theatre hinged on actors, musicians and prompters who crossed the Atlantic. They brought his dramatic repertoire to the East-European theatre scene, mostly between 1896 and 1906, in the form of prompting notebooks and handwritten performance texts (Warnke 2004, 1–29). Some popular plays were sold to publishing houses, mostly in Warsaw and its periphery, that printed and sold Yiddish drama (e.g., *Atalyahu* 1903; *Bet Dovid* 1904; *Ben Hador* 1907). The music from Hurwitz's operettas also extended beyond the theatre stage: sheet music of memorable melodic moments from his operettas was available for purchase, and selected songs were recorded by prominent performers and distributed by commercial gramophone companies. Permeating from the fictional stage into so-called reality, the songs and melodies of Hurwitz's operettas continued to accompany its listenership long after the performances had ended, and when the listeners were able to encode its sounds, it drew them into a stratified 'collective experience,' as Michael Steinlauf terms it (see 1995, 44–65). This affective experience was premised upon feedback and resonance among the dramas, songs and melodies performed in Hurwitz's theatre and the social conditions under which they were shaped. The transnational cultural network of Hurwitz's theatre music disseminated melodies and songs among Jewish centres, enfolding Jewish communities on both sides of the Atlantic. During times of mass migration and accelerated social diffusion, these recordings created a 'community of song'—in the words of Mark Slobin—that was not bound by the bodily co-presence of performers and spectators in the theatres, but rather by the reproduction and circulation of an international repertoire of melodies and songs across continents (1982, 199).

Hurwitz's popular theatre thus produced a ripple effect, which transformed temporal interactions and intervals into spatial networks of theatre performers, performances, and objects. One of the implications of the ripple effect was the formation of multiple, related, yet autonomous economies: the publishing industry, the recording and gramophone business, and the theatre stage, actions that strategized the making of a community. Within this framework, each structure was based and modelled upon the previous one: 'Dovid's Harp' was structured according to the formula of

the *Landsmanshaftn*; the stage provided an embodiment of the migratory identity shared by actors and audience; and, finally, the sound recording media enabled the forging of a community by way of shared rhythms and melodies. On a symbolic level, the travelling of the recorded voice across the Atlantic marked migration as a dynamic web in which individuals could communicate through theatrical moments that transcended physical presence.<sup>23</sup>

Hurwitz's theatre, thus, created recursive worlds that performed (presented and represented) the emotional and practical significance of displacement. It designed a 'media ecology' based on three pillars, fostering a feedback loop between embodied performance, economic structure, and forms of institutionalization (Davis and Marx 2021, 3–6; Bosman 2016, 308). Hurwitz reproduced the migratory experience, which he shared with his audiences, in a looping tripartite form, linking economic institutional structure (as in the case of Dovid's Harp), technological dissemination (commercial sound recordings), and embodied practices (staged in the theatre). However, as these circles of social migratory affiliations began to fade away, Hurwitz was going bankrupt.

By the first years of the twentieth century, it became clear that Hurwitz no longer had a place in the already crowded Yiddish theatre scene in New York. He watched the local Yiddish theatre scene change before his eyes and realized that there was no longer a demand for his kind of musical performances. The audience, no longer migrants but American-Jews, had changed. The public taste had become more refined, and the genre of his operettas had been exhausted. Hurwitz then decided to launch a new initiative: Italian operas sung in Yiddish. As Daniela Smolov Levy writes, in the late summer and fall of 1904, Hurwitz organized an entire season of Italian opera in Yiddish, which included performances of *La Juive*, *Il Trovatore*, *Carmen*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Aida*, and *Rigoletto* (2014, 140–180). This venture marked the last chords of Hurwitz's career. The Italian season was an epic failure and Hurwitz lost every cent he had ever earned.

A few years later, Hurwitz experienced a severe stroke, which left him paralyzed. He was hospitalized at the Montefiore Medical Centre, where he spent the last years of his life. In the final, tragic turn of his life, he was

<sup>23</sup> On music in the Yiddish popular theatre, see Heskes 1984, 73–87; Slobin 2015; Slobin 1982; Warnke 2009, 1–11; Walden 2014, 89–136.

financially supported by his few remaining friends.<sup>24</sup> On March 4, 1910, Hurwitz passed away, lonely and penniless. Approximately 1500 people attended his funeral ('Yiddish Dramatist Dead,' *New York Times*, 1910; '1500 At Dramatist's Burial,' *New York Times*, 1910). The monument of his memory did not endure; Hurwitz's theatre remained outside the Yiddish canon, and his works sunk into oblivion. And yet, at the turn of the twentieth century, his performances had a profound impact on Jewish immigrants, playing a decisive role in the formation of their communities.

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<sup>24</sup>Hurwitz had a daughter, the actress Charlotte (Shifra) Hurwitz (born in Iasi Romania in 1861). She died in 1905.

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