2011

Directing Beyond the Boundaries: A Director's Journey to Personal Style in Directing Diaspora

Mary Elizabeth Wlodarczyk

DIRECTING BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES:

A Director's Journey to Personal Style in Directing *Diaspora*

By

Mary Elizabeth Wlodarczyk

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre: Directing

2011

COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF CANIDACY

Donnell Walsh

Dean of Fine and Performing Arts

Larry D. Quiggins

Director of Theatre Department

Emily Jones

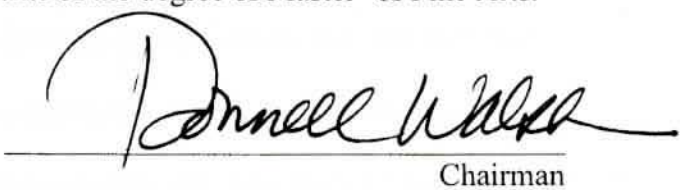
Assistant Professor of Theatre

The Department of Performing Arts

Of

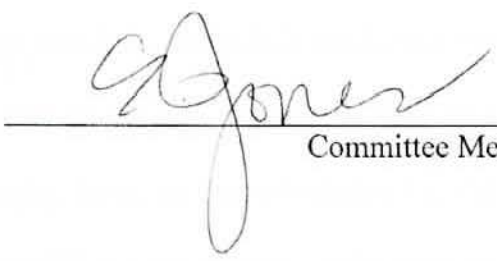
Lindenwood University

Upon the recommendation of the Department of Performing Arts, this thesis is hereby accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Fine Arts.



Chairman
Department of Performing Arts

Committee Member



Committee Member

PROSPECTUS

Even though, the text of *Diaspora* was technically "mine" in the sense that I wrote *Diaspora*, the play text itself became a separate creature at its completion. So the production of Diaspora was not so much my directing a play I wrote, as much as it was an agreement between me and the new text, an autonomous life. In this exacting negotiation, I had to chose where I reside on the spectrum directing philosophies, whether I would embrace complete fidelity to the text or would I see the directing process as more intuitive and flexible (Benedetti 14-15)?

The writers and directors that informed my directing choices included Antonin Artaud, Paul Claudel, Bertolt Brecht, and Peter Brook. Reading their works and what the critics wrote about them illuminated my directing preferences. Aspects of their work fortified my own developing directing philosophy. In the process of researching and directing, the influence of these authors coalesced (Director's notes). In the process, I found myself in harmony with Benedetti's liberal directing category, which honors both the author's assumed intent and a particular era's sensibilities (Benedetti 14-15). Artaud made me desire the truth of the theatre of cruelty. Claudel encouraged me to seek the spiritual and beautiful aspect of theatre. Brecht's relentless bravery in seeking new forms and expressions made me question techniques and directing choices I had taken for granted. Brook made me want to seek the grand and imaginative. After all, theatre should be an original, questioning, and lush in the sense of engaging the mind, heart, and senses (Director's notes).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DIRECTING BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES:

A Director's Journey to Personal Style in Directing *Diaspora*

CHAPTER ONE

The ultimate goal while writing and producing *Diaspora* was to produce visceral theatre that would be memorable as described by Artaud, "We want to make out of the theater a believable reality which gives the heart and the senses that kind of concrete bite which all true senses requires" (85). "What makes a good director of theatre?" was the main question that informed the endeavor.

The first major task of a good director is to reveal the meaning of the play, as expressed in the dialogue and written words of the author. Hodge explains the importance of dialogue:

> In the human context of plays, characters feel or sense one another (as people who live closely together do in everyday life) and consequently do not talk at one another but *with* one another. Thus, the language of drama is highly subjective, inner language. (27)

How the director transmutes the meaning of this language is a matter of theoretical choice. Robert Benedetti, of The California Institute of the Arts, puts directors in three major categories: conservative, liberal, and radical. The conservative director essentially preserves and presents the text, just as a curator transparently and simply hangs a painting on the wall. The goal of this ilk of director is to "transmit the text the text directly, completely, faithfully— and therefore anonymously" (Benedetti 14). At the opposite end of the spectrum is the radical director, for whom the text is the beginning of inspiration. Benedetti explicates, "The radical esthetic eschews forms of the past altogether and returns to the radix or source of the play in order to generate new forms

inspired by the original" (15). In the center of this philosophical spectrum is what Benedetti designates "the liberal director"; he writes:

> By contrast, the liberal point of view holds that the value of a play lies in the way it lives relative to the present moment, and that a successful production results when the essential spirit of a play, transmitted by not entirely bound in the text, is happily married to the specifics of a given cast, theatre, and audience. (14)

The above "liberal" category allows for both fidelity to the ideas of the author and allows for a reasonable amount of creative indulgence. The golden mean of the liberal director results in appropriate allegiance to the script with the edge of the unique and personal mark of the director. Eric Bentley, writer and critic, asserts that the usefulness of any artist, but especially the theatre director, is in purposeful "subversiveness". The director who shuns risk by choosing to function as an historical curator and supervisor is merely "an innocuous artist" (Bentley 92).

This thesis will explicate how Benedetti's liberal point informed directing choices in *Diaspora* and present other hypothetical directing choices that are in keeping with this philosophy. The process of directing *Diaspora* revealed that philosophical category of the liberal director was the most sensible choice in Benedetti's spectrum ranging from conservative to radical. In support of the liberal philosophy of directing, a few efficacious examples of the works of Peter Brook and Bertolt Brecht will be examined.

In the course of directing *Diaspora*, it became evident that the comfortable myth that anyone can comprehend the intent of an author is thoughtlessly passed on to initiates, just as consoling fairytales are told to children. The fallacious myth of the conservative

director, curator of the past, must be prudently shed in favor of the emancipating truth that the author's text comes to each audience in a distinctly different context. Full understanding of the text comes to each audience through each director's inimitable eye of individual interpretation, which is what attracts audiences to the theatre. If this is not the case, then directing is a simple craft, following mulishly set patterns, more than it is a visionary art.

If directing is a valid art in its own *respected* right, then the *liberated* director must take possession of the natural prerogative to artistically interpret and intuit with independence of thought and action. Numerous luminous examples in theatre history, cited later in this thesis, bear witness to this truth.

Let the light of critical questions into the dusty theatre! Theatre's living and breathing body of work was never moved forward by directors who dutifully echo extant examples of what worked before them. Andre Antoine, in his philosophy and career, supported the director's authority to adapt:

> To be a director—or *metteur en scène*—is an art… We must simply strive to do our best by experimenting as much as possible. If we discover something really solid and lasting, we shall have added to the common heritage. (596-612)

The liberal director's *responsibility* is to use the resources of their individual mind to *create*. A conservative director, whose aim it is to reconstruct the past, merely needs a dramaturg and to be alert at rehearsal. For the liberal director, inborn attitudes are an aid to the kind of fruitful experimentation Antoine and other revolutionary directors unremittingly advocated. Armed with this astute knowledge and erudite acceptance of

biases, loyalties and antipathies, an able director can clearly see what is in their artistic toolbox. Going forward with this self-awareness, the liberal director can gingerly mend, deliberately improve and ultimately create. Anne Bogart, professor of theatre at Columbia University, learned this exacting lesson while working as a zealous expatriate director in Berlin. She tried to studiously emulate what she considered to be an ideal European director, essentially using someone else's toolbox. While trying to be what she was not— a European director— had failed, she discovered using her own innate strengths and predispositions produced better results than mimicking others:

> I had a big personal revelation that saved me. I realized with profound conclusiveness that I was an American; I had an American sense of humor, an American sense of structure, rhythm and logic. I thought like an American. I moved like an American. And, all at once, it was clear to me that the rich American tradition of history and people exists to tap into and own. Suddenly I was free... I started to celebrate the shoulders upon which I stand. (80)

As stated above, directing choices in the *Diaspora* production were towards the middle of the spectrum, designated by Benedetti as "liberal". This guiding philosophy helps to make a "good director" (14-15). This philosophy, which embraces the spirit of the text along with the spirit of the times, allows for individual interpretations born of the *director's creativity*. What difference does that make? All the difference in the world, because, "Any increase in divergent-thinking skill should lead, other things being equal, to some increase in creative performance" (Baer 34).

In the process of directing *Diaspora*, it became apparent that the *conservative* view of the director, as stated above was impractical. It is unfair and unrealistic to expect a director with naturally subjective viewpoints to objectively deliver an untouched text with all the organic meaning of its original historic and cultural nuances. Theatrical representations are as much reflections of the age in which they are created as they are of the subject being represented. So when an audience looks at what they think of as reality, they are seeing the mirror image or their time. While writing of innovation in theatre, Brook ruminates, "Picasso began to paint portraits with several eyes and noses the day he felt that to paint a profile— or to paint a full face— was a form of a lie" (84).

None of the guarded proponents of the director-as-custodian point of view can deny that it is the biased instinct and inimitable intelligence of the intuitive individual director is the reason why directors exist in the theatre. Building on internal resources is what every *honest* and effective director sagely does before any consequential work on a play can commence (Jouvet 60). In the process of directing *Diaspora*, I came to agree with Hodge when he states:

> As all artists, the director must first be an adventurous spirit eager to cut new paths, and he must be capable of "soaring" on the level of dramatic poet. Too often he regarded as only the interpreter… yet *if* he can not reach some of the heights as those achieved by the poet he is attempting to reveal on the stage, he is not fulfilling his function. (3)

Many critics of the liberal director's distinctive fingerprint on a play virulently disagree with the philosophically distinct directorial points of this view, which is that each individual director brings the unknown possibility of fertile vitality to a play. This

irresistible promise rapidly vanishes if, as some opponents of the director's creative prerogative propose, a director is nothing but a conventional caretaker and manager of practical details (Jouvet 60).

New territory need not be the privileged realm of the well-traveled; in other words, new directors must be encouraged and allowed to experiment as well as established veterans. Developing directors are not well served by effete advice that only erroneously leads them to replicate the past, instead of appreciating the past as a useful lesson for the express purpose of adding to the current body of work and the entire theatre tradition (Richards 3). Paul Claudel, French writer and director, also condemns the formulaic and fearful artist when he writes:

> Beauty is something you rarely find when you are looking for it. It is natural that false artists, exasperated by the glorious fickleness of inspiration, should try to replace it with a formula, superstitiously followed. (44)

Informed experimentation must be openly endorsed even for neophyte directors because theatre's entire body of work of benefits from a spirit of intrepid innovation. Despite the risk that new interpretations may disappoint or even fail, true art must bear this risk to achieve the priceless benefit of *creation*. Bentley insightfully states, "The price of artistic success being, in general, a good deal of failure." It is this precarious experimentation that develops the individual director and the full scope of theatre as an evolving art form, rather than a preservation society (87).

The question "What makes a good director of theatre?" begs the inseparable question "What is theatre?" Theatre is not a stepchild of other disciplines, but an art and

area of theory in its own right. Alan Read, Professor of Theatre at King's College of the University of London, writes:

> Thinking theatre was not the facile operation of other disciplines applied to the activity, it was the activity of theatre making itself throwing light on those disciplines and the everyday lives they claimed to describe. In this sense theatre became its own way of seeing-a shift which would not have surprised many theorists who from the fields of sociology, psychology and anthropology had long valued the symbolic, theatrical and performative qualities of everyday life and its cultural operations. (27)

Theatre is the joy and pain of human storytelling, including the language of gesture and expression. A cogent description of one facet of what theatre is comes from Antonin Artaud, progenitor of the theatre of cruelty. Artaud describes the chaos of the plague which killed legions of people in Europe. He states that it was in this frenzied crisis that theatre existed in its greatest potency. Artaud elucidates:

> The dregs of the population, apparently immunized by their frenzied greed, enter the open houses and pillage riches they know will serve no purpose or profit. And at that moment, the theatre is born. The theatre, i.e. an immediate gratuitousness provoking acts without use or profit. (24)

The oft considered mutinous Bertolt Brecht also defined theatre's purpose as one of storytelling and questioning. He writes:

> From the first it has been theatre's business to entertain people, as it has of all of the other arts. It is this business that gives it its particular dignity; it needs no other passport than fun, but this it has got to have… theatre must

> remain something entirely superfluous, though this indeed means that it is the superfluous for which we live. Nothing needs less justification than pleasure. (180-181)

The *synthesis* of these views is that theatre exposes the suffering of living, punctuated by flashes of rapture and expresses the ennui between these experiences. Most of all, good theatre questions and *never* preaches. Lessons are often forgotten, but compelling questions always linger.

Before examining past examples, the possibility of what a "liberal" director might produce *now* will be considered. The first example is August Strindberg's *The Stronger,* with a demonstration of the difference between what a liberal and a conservative director *might* do with the play. *The Stronger,* is short play about two women, Miss Y and Mrs. X, who both want the same man. While at a café on Christmas Eve, the wife starts a conversation with the woman she knows is the mistress of her husband. The conversation begins in a polite but catty manner, until the tension builds to the point when the wife claims victory over the mistress. Mrs. X states:

> Your soul bored itself into mine as a worm into an apple, and it ate and ate, and burrowed and burrowed, till nothing was left but the outside shell and a little black dust… I am the stronger now. You never got anything from me; you merely gave … I'm going home now—I'll take the tulips with me—your tulips. You couldn't learn anything from others; you couldn't bend and so you broke like a dry stem—and I didn't.Thank you for all your instructions. I thank you that you have taught me how to love my husband. Now I'm going home—to him! [Exit.] (Strindberg)

The text of Strindberg's *The Stronger* is ageless and does not require a historically accurate setting. It is the perfect opportunity for the liberal director to share the author's intent in a new milieu. A conservative director, on the other hand, would be dramaturgically bound to recreating a limited vision of 1890, which could unnaturally distance the audience from the essence of the play. The aspiration is to close the chasm between the audience and the play, to psychologically erase the edge between the auditorium seats and the stage and make the feelings primitively real. Artaud explains, "All true feeling in is in reality untranslatable. To express it is to betray it. But to translate it is to *dissimulate* it. True expression hides what it makes manifest" (71)

From the liberal directing point of view, this simple yet powerful play could be set it in a posh urban environment, such as the Upper East Side of Manhattan. The two characters could be well-heeled women at the same café after Christmas shopping. Both carry glossy shopping bags from the flagship stores of fashion's great icons. Setting the play in the "old money" section of Manhattan immediately gives the audience a culturally familiar context in which to understand the crux of the play: a tersely polite but heated catfight after a hard day's Christmas shopping.

A creative turn liberal director might take is related the effects of lighting. Mrs. X could be in a green dress and Miss Y in a red dress. The lighting plan makes Mrs. X appears to be in black in the beginning and Miss Y remains in her red dress. As the lighting changes and the conversation becomes more intense, Miss Y's dress darkens to black, while the gradual lighting changes makes Mrs. X's dress appear in its true shade of jewel green. This lighting effect emphasizes the dialogue, because Mrs. X ends the play declaring her strength, while Miss Y fades. In this short play, Mrs. X does all of the

talking. Another alternative directing choice I would make for the Strindberg's *The Stronger* deals with casting. Both actresses could learn the part of Mrs. X and have them play the part on alternating nights, giving the actors and the audience a varied experience in addition to current setting.

Another classic play that would be ideal for a liberal interpretation is Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* is set the play in present day. One aspect of the play is that the plot particularly harmonizes with the present sympathy for environmental "green" issues. In the sense of appealing to universal emotions, Dr. Stockman and his family suffering for his commitment to the standing up for his ideals appeals to a timeless sense of justice. The competition between brothers is also an ancient conflict. In most respects, the script's *language* dovetails with modern speech, as the following excerpt proves.

> PETER STOCKMAN. Mark my words, Mr. Hovstad—the Baths will become the focus of our municipal life! Not a doubt of it!
>
> MRS. STOCKMAN. That is just what Thomas says.
>
> PETER STOCKMAN. Think how extraordinarily the place has developed within the last year or two! Money has been flowing in, and there is some life and some business doing in the town. Houses and landed property are rising in value every day.
>
> HOVSTAD. And unemployment is diminishing. (Ibsen)

Looking at *An Enemy of the People* from a different angle, resulting in different staging, opens up the meaning to current audiences. This is important because the judgments from the current audience are as important as the original audience of Ibsen. Grenz elaborates:

> Meaning is not merely a matter of what the author intended, lying in the text, waiting to be unlocked by means of scientific and empathetic interpretation. Rather, meaning emerges as the text and the interpreter engage in dialogue, in a hermeneutical conversation. The goal of this dialogue is an intersection of the horizon of the author and the horizon of the interpreter. (Grenz 110)

Directing choices in *Diaspora* were influenced by the liberal directing point of view, but were tempered by the realities of producing a thesis project with material boundaries. For example, Phillip Hughes' set had to successfully serve *Diaspora* and the other thesis project presented on the same evenings. The guidance of the *Diaspora* project's advisor, who had his own informed input regarding the *Diaspora*, was a positive influence. One particular case was when the cast was working on a moment when Wacek and Ewa, unforgiving son and unrepentant mother, make a fragile emotional truce. The influence of the outside perspective of the advisor helped the actors work through this climactic moment. In other words, another perspective helped solve the problem. The help arrived in the form of new questions for the actors and a discussion of what reunification meant and resulted in true understanding between the actors.

In directing *Diaspora,* the author's directing philosophy coalesced in the daily activities of planning and running rehearsals. Thus, directing choices did not adhere to the conservative view of directing, which deems the text, even text no longer copyrighted, as untouchable. The result was a willingness to cut lines that did not serve the production. This action was ethical, because the director and writer were one in the same. These choices were consequential, because theatre is more than spoken word. Artaud writes:

> Instead of continuing to rely upon texts considered definitive and sacred, it is essential to put an end to the subjugation of the theatre to the text, and to recover the notion of a kind of unique language half-way between gesture and thought. (89)

Another example of liberal directing in *Diaspora* was the versatility displayed in making changes to acting choices that did not work to serve the production. For example, actors might have practiced a scene for weeks with certain specificities. After a while the actors might have become complacent in that scene. In situation like that, the cast would examine motivation and acting choices. After a discussion about the scene, acting changes in the spirit of the actors' motivation would be made. This was ethical, even towards the end of the rehearsal process, because the goal is always the show and the rehearsals are the means to that end.

Change, change, and more changes are ethical if the production's quality requires it. If a symphony was rehearsing and a note was dissonant, a conductor would not keep the flaw because the orchestra had been rehearsing that way for a while. Likewise, a director should mend a flaw in a play production, even if it is a flaw that develops late in the rehearsal period. A cast that is *united in purpose* from the beginning of rehearsals can evolve together even in an atmosphere of questioning and constant evolution. Artaud writes:

> It seems indeed that where simplicity and order reign, there can be no theater nor drama, and the true theater… is born out of a kind of organized anarchy after philosophical battles which are the passionate aspect of these primitive unifications. (51)

Intelligent and beautiful theatre is born out of challenging rehearsals, debates, and constant questioning.

In search of directing guidance in *Diaspora*, many directing guidebooks proffered both advice and questions. The question of how a director deals with established texts must be faced, because directing established texts and classic plays is how new directors are trained. A skeptic must ask why are so many supposedly well-intentioned instructional directing books, such as Charles Marowitz's *Directing the Action* and Terry McCabe's *Mis-directing the Play*, intended to inculcate the fledgling directors in an orthodoxy based on the specious assumption that the director must subvert their own analysis in order to exclusively serve as conduits for the static text latent with untold prospects?

How tragic is this practice of the status quo subversion of new interpretation! Bly states, "If we approach a play as if it were a new world, we should encounter it free of assumption" (20). This is especially intriguing considering the authors of the above mentioned books hypocritically spend a considerable about of time in said books rationalizing exceptions. These exceptions conveniently and typically serve the private tastes of the many authors who claim to be the arbiters of the playwright's voice. If developing directors follow the common advice in such "how to" books, they will never make the kind of discoveries or revelatory advancements of innovative directors who venturesomely worked before them.

Marowitz, like so many others who write about directing, inconsistently argues for uniformity of style in not only in what he considers the hallowed classics but scripts that are considered current and fashionable. Is not this rigid expectation the result of

cowardly collective agreement based on past performances and an assemblage of circumspect worldviews? Moreover, who is to determine the "integrity" of a play or the intentions of its creator? The skeptic *must* wonder what imaginative performances never were begotten because of this dogma. Marowitz writes:

> What the method has done over the past fifty years is to shift the balance of power away from the playwright and towards the actor. Whereas this has produced some startling performance results, it has revealed an alarming tendency to subvert the integrity of the play… it is more apparent in classics where a uniformity of style is demanded and personal idiosyncrasy more conspicuous. (24)

Any reasoning and courageous director must question why certain aspects or conventions in a play are "demanded". What if what is considered "idiosyncrasy" is just another way of shaking the dust off of what is intractably habitual theatre. It is *habit* that causes theatre to fade like a sepia-toned photograph, once sharp and captivating. Audiences should not be blamed for lack of interest. Artaud writes:

> If the age turns away from the theatre, in which it is no longer interested, it is because theatre has ceased to represent it. It no longer hopes to be provided by the theatre with myths which it can sustain itself. (115)

Whether the debate is over familiar Shakespeare or ancient tragedy, these obdurate standards can not hold when one acknowledges the undeniable reality that classical or even popular canonized scripts can have different meanings in different times. For example, ancient audiences knew the background of every reprobate divinity and impossibly human character. On the contrary, present-day audience members and anyone

working on a classical play will likely need background information as a foundation to help them understand a classical work (Pavis 52-55).

Much of the instruction received in the prelude to directing *Diaspora* was based on directing guidebooks which do not allow for complications for most productions of "classics" or modern works of the twentieth century. One major issue is that the very concepts of religion and authority, among other major social contexts have changed since Euripides and his cohorts wrote legendary plays. This is even true for play scripts from the nineteenth century and some from the twentieth century. Just as time and the elements erode soil, significant meaning is continually lost in the text of the ancient's classics and the evolving canon of classics. The same happens in the swift decades that are the postlude to twentieth century works. It is the *privilege* of the intrepid director to genuinely rediscover what can be found in the classics and prudently create what can be made from the ancient texts (Pavis 52-55).

Another critical concern is that so many texts related to a classical play are no longer extant, which seriously impacts the understanding of directors, actors, and audiences of any classical work today. The result is that a production completely faithful to a classical text is not attainable; imagine looking at a Shakespeare play without the breadth of knowledge gained from other Shakespeare texts and productions. When directors and scholars argue for a purist approach to well-worn scripts, they are setting up an improbable and inappropriate standard (Pavis 52-55).

Regarding the search for new presentations of established scripts from the ancient to the present age, Brecht wrote, "There are many conceivable ways of telling a story, some of them known and some still to be discovered" (201). What authority can

conclusively say that everything that can or "should" be done with a text has been done? Peter Brook, an iconoclast who produced such daring works as the sparse but intense *Carmen* and a radical but vivid *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*, believed and practiced the philosophy that classics can be legitimately and respectfully reinterpreted. Brook discovered that rather than there being a set meaning and a set way of expressing a line in Shakespeare, there is a multitude of options; likewise, other treasured classics have unexpected potentialities (94). Brook was able to explore diverse possibilities in productions, because of his custom of intensely researching and contemplating a playwright's work before, during— and often after—producing a work. Once he directed a script, it became a part of his vision and informed future productions (Jones 21). Regarding the assumed purity of the text and the rights of the director to augment or abridge, Brook took a libertine but informed approach:

> Should we respect the text? I think there is a healthy double attitude, with respect on the one hand and disrespect on the other. And the dialectic between the two is what it is all about. If you go solely one or the other way, you lose the possibility of capturing the truth. (95)

Rather than there being a designated explanation of a classic such as a Shakespeare text, there is a universe of choices; likewise, other treasured classics have unheard of potentialities (Brook 94). People often think of Shakespeare as "static" which, according to Brook, was never intended. Cultural expectations are set by fashionable definitions which are always behind new artistic development (93). If this freedom of interpretation is possible, it is the *privilege* and *obligation* of the discerning director to implement possibilities of which have not yet been dreamt.

Despite numerous examples of directors, such as Brook, who innovated successfully, the pedantic dogma of the director as inanimate conduit of the literary oracle from the playwright persists. Regarding the liberal director's sanction to reinterpret familiar texts, support is found among the audacious experimentations that have crossed the stage in the last century. One such example of Brook's fantastic theatrical experimentation was the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1964 production of Peter Weiss' *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade,* which is commonly known as *Marat/Sade*. Jones writes:

> Weiss, an East German playwright living in Sweden, deliberately sought to bring together Brechtian elements of objectivity and Artaudian effects of sensibility and subjectivity in a highly eclectic script which proved quite complementary to Brook's current thinking about "total theater". (76)

What was memorable about *Marat/Sade* is Brook's sense of play even in the suffering of the inmates. The audience watches the inmates, with their individual afflictions, make the best they can of their prison and, in the observation, see that every person goes through similar machinations. The surrealism of the production allows the audience to feel universal experiences: feeling powerless or vulnerable, experiencing hierarchical tensions between people of different status, and the seeking of safety in a hostile world (Jones 75-76).

In writing about the role of the director, Marowitz blankly cites the "recent" inception of directing as an extraneous development crafted from the start of nineteenth century. Consequently, Marowitz's view results in this supposedly neoteric superfluous

profession deserving little consideration. It would seem that Marowitz would prefer that directors had remained the unnoticed combination of actor and stage manager of centuries past (1-3). McCabe even goes so far as to call the actual concept of the creative director a "myth" and a dubitably recent one at that. The mere fact that the *title* of director has existed for about 125 years seems reason enough for McCabe to readily discount the indispensable function of the director as a newfangled frivolity of excessive ego and burgeoning bureaucracy (16).

McCabe also clearly states disapproval of innovative directors who may choose to enhance the play with editorial choices. He writes, "Directing that seeks to control the text, instead of subordinating itself to the text, is bad directing" (16). He allows *no* middle ground for interpretation, innovation, or original vision. If new directors were to follow this example, every play would be a revival of one already done. Marowitz's cynical view of directors simply categorizes them as a sturdy amalgam of stage assistant and office assistant. He asserts:

> The autocrat director controls his actors; the modern director appropriates to himself those intellectual ingredients usually reserved for the playwright— using the tangible instruments of the stage as a penmanship with which he alters or gives personal connotation to the text of playwrights both living and dead. (2)

Marowitz quickly contradicts his early facile pronouncements. Despite proclaiming fidelity to the ostensibly sacrosanct text and what an obsequious director can assume about an author's intentions, Marowitz inversely claims that the words of *living playwrights with which he works* should be open to his adjudications. On the contrary, he

claims a director should cut lines if the *director* wills it. One must wonder if this advice in his instructional book is meant to inform or confuse new directors. Marowitz contends:

> An author who insists on the integrity of his original line in the face of all the new dynamics that now surround it is harking back to an earlier phase of development in the creative process: a phase when he and he alone was the arbiter of dramatic effect. (9)

In the previous passage, Marowitz conveniently delineates between the time the author had complete control of the script and the critical juncture at which the director takes charge. According to Marowitz, the living playwright with which he works *had* their chance to make decisions, but gives up all authority to the director. This is a patent contradiction to his formally-stated purist view of the director as chimerical preserver of the text. This also solidly reinforces the *rights* of editorial and interpretive control of the director. When writing of editing the text of living playwrights under his directorial thumb, Marowitz boldly asserts, "The removal of a cyst, a boil, or a tumor from the human body also involves loss of texture, but the organism in most often better for the excision" (11).

McCabe is no more consistent in his sentimentalism over the inviolability of the text than Marowitz. McCabe honors a false purity that assumes any influence that affects the interpretive outcome of the play is "contamination" (37-38). On the contrary, it is this "contamination" that makes productions of plays— both the familiar and the new— distinct and interesting. Brecht writes:

> For time flows on, and if it did not it would be a poor look-out for those who have no golden tables to sit at. Methods wear out, stimuli fail. New

> problems loom up and demand new techniques. Reality alters; to represent it the means of representation must change too. Nothing arises from nothing; the new springs from the old, but that is just what makes it new. (110)

The fact that McCabe wholeheartedly supports enterprising productions with discernable deviations that are extraneous to the author's text contradicts his presumed loyalty to the supposedly valued text (McCabe 37-38).

Artaud writes of the director's authority when he states:

> If, then, the author is the man who arranges the language of speech and the director is his slave, there is merely a question of words. There is here a confusion over terms… This confusion will be possible and the director will be forced to play second fiddle to the author only so long as there is a tacit agreement that the language of words is superior to others and that the theater admits none other than this one language. (119)

For a liberal director, the above statement justifies a subjective director directing in a subjective manner. Michael Redgrave, esteemed actor and director, writes that many people produce a play in a style which they *allege* to be pure, but what the director is actually revealing in the production in their *own distinct preference* (67).

A glaring example of the widely accepted hypocritical double standard of the conservative director is McCabe's enthusiastic approval of a production of *The Bald Soprano* which featured actors with their eyes smoothly glued shut. The director's decision to glue the actors' eyes shut was purely the director's choice and was *not* indicated in any way in the supposedly governing script, but McCabe approved of this

alleged usurpation of the script's reign (37-38). In addition, McCabe indubitably approved of another inspired example of an innovative production that centered on ancillary factors that were not even hinted at in the script: Tadashi Suzuki's "sublime production" of *The Trojan Women*, which was inventively set in Japan at the end of World War II. McCabe elaborates:

> The present-tense theatrical reality is that of 1945 Japan; the drama that unfolds is that of ancient Troy. The woman's body is inhibited by the spirits of the individual women of Troy. The characters are not played by separate actresses in this production but are channeled, one at a time, by Suzuki's actress, the great Kayoko Shiraishi… in the play's final section she berates Jizo, the Buddhist deity who is traditionally the Protector of Children, who had stood silently onstage since the beginning of the play, seeing everything and doing nothing. (18-19)

The bold production of *The Bald Soprano* and the fascinating production of *The Trojan Women* were both not technically loyally interpretive and honor-bound to the respected script. On the contrary, these productions were shrewd and memorable reinterpretations of said texts.

It seems time for the prophets of textual purity to openly admit that the individual director's singular bias is an immeasurable advantage to the static text. It is not, as the critics claim, an exploitation of the text. In the apt words of Claudel:

> I have shown that everything is poetry, and there is unbroken continuity from the lowest and coarsest words to the most sublime… Everything grows from the same root, and one thing gives birth to another— feelings,

> noises, words, songs, cries, and music— sometimes yielding ground, sometimes claiming it. (74)

While examining the conservative directors point of view, the intransigent position of those who claim to channel and interpret the author's voice, it is natural to follow the pendulum to controversial alternatives. Admired as often as he is despised, Antonin Artaud did not belong to his age but he remains the genuine companion of anyone who seeks to improve the theatre arts. Artaud certainly did not believe that the thinking director must acquiesce to a strict interpretation of the text. He writes:

> Thus we shall renounce the theatrical superstition of the text and the dictatorship of the writer. And thus we rejoin the ancient popular drama, sensed and experienced directly by the mind without the deformation of language and barrier of speech. (124)

Despite different views on directing, Marowitz and Brooks actually worked together in the "Theater of Cruelty" experiment lasting five weeks in January 1964. Not surprisingly, the two directors had contrary guiding philosophies for rehearsal. Marowitz wanted to ground the "Theater of Cruelty" rehearsals with exercises from his background in Stanislavski. Brook believed that the group of twelve actors had the skill and critical thinking ability to immediately immerse them in this experimental "homage" to Artaud. Brook's influence weighted the project more towards the experimental. It was an enterprise bankrolled by the Royal Shakespeare Company, but had the unusual liberty of existing mainly for the purpose of theatrical experimentation without the official burden of producing a pat production for profit. It is worth noting that although the illustrious

Royal Shakespeare Company sponsored the project, the "Theater of Cruelty" project was staged and housed away from any official Royal Shakespeare Company. (Jones 71-76).

The consummation of Brook's contribution to the "Theater of Cruelty" experiment is his famous ritualistic bath scene, Brook's experimentation with Artaudian principles resulted in his famous "Public Bath" scene in which a call girl experiences a ritual bath in a bathtub and emerges transformed. Jones explains:

> She is stripped of her clothes preceding enactment of a required prison bath. The bath tub, suddenly raised and carried like a coffin, reveals a transformed girl, the ritual purification has produced Jacqueline Kennedy ... former pristine in her recent bereavement and public show of valor. (73)

Brook's directing choices were critical, because his direction in the "Theater of Cruelty" experiment showed the importance of Artaudian experimentation even for an established institution like the illustrious Royal Shakespeare Company. Incidentally, this scene gave the already precarious "Theater of Cruelty" project the distinction of being the "dirtiest" show of the 1964 season. Brook's influence was crucial because the essence of this experimentation was not shock but confrontation with the truth, which can enhance theatre's entire body of work. It walks the delicate line between reality and illusion (Jones 73).

Peter Brook's open-minded sympathy for Artaud's search for the unspoiled truth between the words and what Brook calls "what lies in between the words" can be seen in Brook's writings (16). Theatrical language expresses the unspoken, so that what we see is not text but layer upon layers of meaning that merges action with words. Brecht writes, "For language is theatrical in so far as it primarily expresses the mutual attitude of the

speakers" (166). In his unique way, Brook unceasingly questioned the proverbial hegemony of the changeless text and the perpetually inconsistent portrayal of "truth" in theatre, which in itself is elusive (Brook 60). Grenz buttresses this view when he writes, "Truth is not absolute and autonomous… it is relational" (106). Brook himself saw the dissonance between status quo and sincere theatre artists who sought a verisimilitude of their own. He philosophizes:

> What do we mean when we use words like "true," "real," "natural"? We use them as shields to prevent ourselves being hurt by a theatrical experience. Because a real experience would be so painful and so strange that it would seem "unreal," "untrue", "unnatural"? (Brook 60)

The question of what is true and natural supports the legitimacy of so many gallant directors who have attempted to pioneer new ways to find truth in theatre and will certainly continue to do so for their intellectual offspring who try news forms now unfathomable (Brook 134). Brecht's parables are one example of a form that was unexpected but appropriate for his time. He did not replicate past successes of his own or others, he tried to speak in the vernacular of his generation. Brecht writes:

> The main subject of the drama must be relationships between one man and another as they exist today, and that is what I'm primarily concerned to investigate and find means of expression for… I show them in parables: if you act this way the following will happen, but if you act like that the opposite will take place. (67)

Unlock the doors of the tradition of textual hegemony, open the windows of imposing convention, and wait and see what will be. Indeed, "chance" is where the possibility in theatre abides (Knapp 58).

On the other side of chance is safety of the conservative director's philosophy. The fallacious security of producing every play as a revival of the assumed literal intentions does not endure the constructive reality of staging plays (McCabe 38). Brecht supported radical reinterpretations of new forms and interpretations of familiar forms and texts for the same reasons Brook and others walked the tightrope of innovation, because to do what has been done before can not bear the harsh spotlight of a critical new audience. Brecht wrote:

> I don't think the traditional form of theatre means anything any longer. Its significance is purely historic; it can illuminate the way in which earlier ages regarded human relationships, and particularly relationships between men and women. Works by such people as Ibsen and Strindberg remain important historical documents, but they no longer move anybody. A modern spectator can't learn anything from them. (66)

In support of the conservative directing philosophy McCabe artlessly claims, "You are the deliveryman, and the play is the package," he goes on to support the opposite of his staunch standard, as stated by this enervated analogy (38). When addressing the question of how to interpret the individual meaning of a play, McCabe sounds more like what *he* considers radical directors. He states:

> One director may see *Waiting for Godot* as a statement of the hopelessness of human existence. Another may see it as a testament to the power of

> faith, the belief in things unseen. It is impossible to say that either, or any other thoughtful, interpretations are incorrect. (50-51)

The disconcerting question of *what the director's rights are* arises while examining other time-honored scripts. The provocative debate over the true meaning of *Oedipus the King* has literally continued for ages. Even though Oedipus, the character, attempted to behave morally, he unwittingly committed all the transgressions unbiased fate had waiting for him. He consciously made choices that were ostensibly righteous. He was unfairly damned from the start of his cursed and infamous life. What does this say about human existence? If the answer was simple, curious directors, earnest actors, expectant audiences, and inquiring critics would not still be asking the question.

Even McCabe willingly admits that it is the director's enterprising interpretation that sets the theme for any play, but especially plays that are historically woven into cultural narratives. If the meaning of plays is still difficult to reach, how can any lucid director claim to be delivering the veritable voice of the play's author (McCabe 48-49)? Regarding the meaning of tangible inked words of the author, Gaggi states:

> To argue that the apparent meaning of a text is never the ambiguous truth about it and that other unacknowledged meanings may be present that are different or even opposed to the apparent one and which, when discovered, will tend to subvert the text's apparent meaning… Slips, inadvertent symbols, and accidental puns may reveal an unconscious content denied overtly by the text. (6)

In other words, even if the director did faithfully "deliver the package" (McCabe 38), there is much unintended meaning radiating from the production (Gaggi 6).

The director does not have control over the audience's interpretation. Even if the elusive author's truth were perfectly clear to the reasoning director, the director does not have the final choice of how the play is ultimately filtered in the audiences' mind. This is true regardless of how closely a director approaches the presumed truth of the author (McCabe 47). The unfathomable alchemy that occurs when a play is being performed is beyond the director's control. The way the offering of the play is perceived by the audience is as intimate and singular as an "imaginative, shared experience of the strange events on stage" (Fischer-Lichte 70).

The communal encounter of theatre exposes the *limits* of language and the *gravity* of the audience experiencing the actual performance. Gaggi writes, "One realizes that language is a prison house from which there can be no escape" 163) The dynamic and fleeting experience of the one billionth performance of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* will be individually filtered and fundamentally experienced differently by the audience, no matter how unwaveringly a director emulates previous productions or mimics respected traditions. According to Fischer-Lichte:

> The spectators are separated from their usual lives... The performance is experienced as the threshold or transformation phase which allows the spectator to discard the old identity and try out new ones. (70)

The exemplar of this mystifying transformation is Brook's exciting 1971 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Just as the expectant audience sheds their normal outer world, the befuddled characters of Shakespeare's poetic romp in the woods all magically undergo their own respective transformation. All of the major characters travel through their rite of passage in the mystical escapade of a bewitched night that

ends in morning's rational light and sensible resolutions (Fischer-Lichte 63-68). Brook successfully told what had become a stock story in the relevant dramatic language of the time. Brecht writes of how directors choose their aesthetic communication:

> Since there seems to be a good deal of confusion as to what is new and what is old, while fear that the old will return has become mixed with fear that the new will step in… yet art can only find its feet by going ahead. (209)

The significance of Brook's inventive production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is that he genuinely epitomizes what can be achieved when unorthodox directors choose to emancipate themselves from the constricting precept that directing is akin to solely presenting the text in an unattainable, abstract purity. In support of a pioneering approach to directing, Brook writes:

> In my opinion we should first try to rediscover the play as a living thing; then we shall be able to analyze our discoveries. Once I have finished working on a play, I can begin to analyze my discoveries. (97)

From the perspective of the liberal director, Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is what this lionhearted approach to interpreting the immeasurable potential of scripts produces. Instead of corpulently cherubic fairies and romanticized artificial woods, Brook turned the commonly aureate dreamland into a startling Spartan white box. Brook's set was a blank canvas on which the winsome actors painted their wicked enchantment. Before this daring production, no one had ever imagined fairies "dressed in nondescript gray satin slacks and shirts" playing "atonal music on bongo drums, tubular bells, and Elizabethan guitars creating sound effects on washboards and metal sheets" (Croyden 4).

This sparse woodland dream was not stationary, but lyrically acrobatic. Actors swung about and played with the pure joy that is rarely seen outside of childhood. The unique trees were tangled metal wires, coiled to capture confounded lovers. Sovereign Oberon and clowning Puck spun through the air in single jewel toned costumes that seemed to fuse into the vision of the memorably unconventional set. Regal Titania, dressed in emerald green, delicately floated in the air. Meanwhile the Ass, in course contrast, wore a clown nose, plodded along in an undershirt and clogs. The dexterous movement of the text was reflected in the magnetic fluidity of the actor's vigorous synergy (Croyden 4-5).

The result of the controversy over Brook's fearless interpretation *A Midsummer Night's Dream* revived interest in the play more than any well-worn period revival. The reason is that it superlatively exemplified the essence of what theatre is: a temporal dream in which transform mortal reality rather than being limited by it. Brecht explicates:

> "Theatre" consists in this: making live representations of reported or invented happenings between human beings and doing so with a view to entertainment. At any rate that is what we shall mean when we speak of theatre, old or new. (180)

Many critics of the liberal director's prerogative would vehemently censure a director for making such a speculative choice despite the critical success of Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Brook's historic interpretation of Shakespeare's literary adventure through the jarringly modern forest, however, charmed many critics. Clive Barnes, of the New York Times, wrote in 1971 of Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream:*

> This is without any equivocation whatsoever the greatest production of Shakespeare I have ever seen in my life-and for my joys and my sins I

> have seen literally hundreds… It is the most genuinely and deeply original production of Shakespeare in decades… He has taken this script and staged it with regard for nothing but its sense and meaning. He has collaborated with Shakespeare, not twisted his arm or blinded his senses, not tried to be superior, but just helped him out to get this strange play on stage. (par. 3, par. 5)

Not all critics were infatuated by Brook's contemporary deconstruction of Victorian expectations. Peter Fiddick of the Guardian wrote in 1970 that Brook was more exploitive than creative:

> The problem needs to be stated firmly, because there are times in this new production where even though you have just been stunned by some superb coup, and though you certainly are forced to listen to the text with a fresh ear, you suspect that Shakespeare is being milked for some spice… (par. 4)

Brook faced similar accusations when he directed his transformed *Carmen* in 1981; this version of the ubiquitous opera was shocking to devotees of Georges Bizet's celebrated *La Trag`edie de Carmen,* who customarily expected an opera replete with abundant crowd scenes, an extravagant orchestra, wildly roving bands of gypsies and a full set with the minute nineteenth century detail to match the splendor of the story one of history's most dangerous women. In Brook's *Carmen*, Brook chose to return to Bizet's source material, Merimee's novella *Carmen*. He created a stark, seductive stage world with few characters and the essence of the struggle in Bizet's beloved opera (Croyden 185-188). More so than an ornate nineteenth-century set, Brook's prodigious set depicted the environment of the Gypsy temptress. Croyden writes:

> To be sure, the mise-en-scene was stunning. The heat of southern Spain and the barrenness of the land was rendered in muted colors. Persian rugs and throw pillows were used for the tavern scene and for changes in scenery, while the flickering little fires surrounding the mountain hideaway of the lovers, who were lying in each other's arms in total silence. (187)

Even though Brook's reformed version retained songs essential to the telling the story of the complex *character* of Carmen and her retinue, some "Carmenologists" felt cheated out of nineteenth-century fairy-tale expectations. Drama critiques, however, felicitously supported Brook's retelling of the eminent opera. Brook was lauded as a genuine creative virtuoso, whose reinterpretation was both original and true to the purpose of the story of the character of Carmen. This is true whether one scrupulously examines Merimee's heroine or Bizet's version of the archetypal seductress. In addition, Brook dealt well with the abrupt and sometimes awkward transitions that are standard in opera's canon of audience favorites. By taking the essence of the story and music of *Carmen* and *La Trag`edie de Carmen,* the elements, Brook dissolved the schism between music and words, between acting and singing (Schonberg 1983). Essentially, Bizet's opera might have indestructibly remained the same, but audiences change. Hodge supports reinventing established works when he writes, "Ideas in plays become lost in time. When we lose the context of a period, we also have a difficulty in reestablishing the ideas that made the plays of that period live in their day" (323).

Concerning Brook's abbreviated *Carmen*, music critics were less generous than drama critics. Brook's controversial reinterpretation generated accusations of heretical

misrepresentation of the treasured opera (Croyden 185-188). While some critics admitted they did not miss the absence of the typical meandering recitative that is standard in opera, music critics mourned what they saw as the loss of the beautiful decadence of a nineteenth-century standard. According to an anonymous 1983 New York times review:

> *La Tragedie de Carmen* is a peculiar hybrid, a bird that makes noises like an opera but looks like a play and may be neither so much as a celebration of a director's ingenuity. Peter Brook's creation is unquestionably a tour de force from a conventional theatrical viewpoint… It is likely, however, to give hives to any Bizet lover… what results is simply a self-indulgent auteur's meditation on the opera's theme. I found it interesting but somewhat less than totally arresting. (par. 5)

Perhaps the most offensive vicissitude to the loyal opera purists was Brook's reordering of the familiar score. The score was in public domain by that time and Brook's rendering was technically legal, if not irreverent. Moreover, the complete orchestra was reduced to 14 musicians. This reduction competently represented the necessary sections of the orchestra. Brook's radical *Carmen* affirms that thoughtful deconstruction of familiar texts can be extremely disconcerting to critics of a director's right to interpret (Croyden 185-186). Regarding Brook's *Carmen* 1983 United States' debut, Harold C. Schonberg writes:

> The purists will shrug their shoulders and say that the Brook "Carmen" is nothing but a *reductio ad absurdum* of directors running wild…If the Brook concept does take hold - and Mr. Brook has been quoted as saying that other operas will be studied with a view toward the same treatment—

> where will there be an end? Will those who admire the Brook "Carmen" admire a reinterpretation of "Don Giovanni" or the Wagner "Ring" with the four operas all boiled down to 90 minutes? (par. 22)

Frank Rich of the New York Times shared Schonberg's skepticism. Rich was disturbed by what he considered to be an amputation of what made the opera appealing. He writes in 1983:

> What's been left out is much of the letter and some of the spirit of what may be the world's most popular piece of musical theater. Mr. Brook and his collaborators, the screenwriter Jean-Claude Carriere and the composer Marius Constant, have demolished their source… And what, you ask, remains? Not Bizet's "Carmen," that's for sure. This version is no substitute for the glorious original and can't be taken as such. Nor have we regained the whole of Prosper Merimee's "Carmen," the novella that inspired Bizet. (par. 11)

What makes Bizet's ubiquitous opera *exempt* from artistic evolution? It is and has been for some time common for directors to trim, edit, and rearrange favorite plays from other generations. There is no reason for the shock over Brook's reduced but not diminished *Carmen*. Benedetti practically suggests cutting prolonged plays such as *Hamlet* and changing the staging of some classic plays to reflect current understandings of the play and its history (62-64). Even the skeptic Marowitz surrenders his devotion to the conservative directing philosophy, contradicting the basic premise of his book. He admits that *editorial* interpretation of the individual director is the lifeblood of a play. He plainly writes:

> A great play is only a sounding board for a great interpretation— which is just another way of saying that in theatre, the resourcefulness of a writer is indissolubly linked to the perceptions of the interpreter and that one can not possibly prosper without the other. (19)

Just as Brook daringly questioned established traditions set before him, a perceptive director must always question why they are making the choices they make. The thinking director must examine whatever precedence holds hegemony. Is the director's judgment based on past popular performances? Is the director making critical determinations based primarily on the entrenched and mediocre tenet that the director is moderator of actor's schedules, parental mitigator of cast conflict, and a passive conduit of texts? This point of view neglects the consequential interpretive role of the individual director. A startling production like Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* would not have been possible under the suffocating domination of such intractable ideology of the absolute autocracy of the text. In the adamant words of Artaud, "The author who uses written words only has nothing to do with theater and must give way to specialists in its objective and animated sorcery" (73).

McCabe, of course, imprudently disapproves of a director setting a play in alternative settings, limiting the undiscovered potential in a latent text. He seems to think that any and all additions to the play negligently betray the author and, as an adverse consequence, the audience. The informed skeptic must wonder if any extant script has survived in its supposed purity (22). Even assuming a script exists in an intact construction, McCabe despotically constricts the role of a director to mere moderator, whose limited function it is to keep the production from avoiding catastrophe and serving

the static lines of the script (21).

What a foundation upon which to base every breath, pause and turn of a play production! The actual language in the play's text is based "on its own differences and oppositions that exist within its own system" so the text's value is similar to the value of a floating currency: pliable and relative without losing integrity. The extant language in the play's text refers back to itself. Gaggi precisely concludes, "Not only can we not determine unambiguously whether what is being said is true or not, we can not determine unambiguously what it is that is being said." The closest simile to a concrete meaning of language is a mutually agreed upon meaning arrived at by accordance, which fluidly and frequently fluctuates with civilization's changeable ethics (Gaggi 162). Grenz further clarifies the influence of society's evolving mores and criterion, from which no one is immune. No amount of historical background or imagination can allow a modern audience member to attend a Shakespeare play and acquire the original understanding of Shakespeare's first unruly audiences. Grenz states:

> Whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth are dependent upon the community in which we participate. Further, and far more radically, the postmodern world view affirms that this relativity extends beyond our perceptions of truth to its essence: there is no absolute truth; rather truth is relative to the community in which we participate. (7-8)

Theatre traditions are about agreed-upon boundaries. Audiences, directors and other theatrical artists may ostensibly claim to be interested in the search for new expressions, forms, and meanings, but habit is usually comparatively safer and more

comfortable. Even within the context of mutual meanings, the fragile structures created with language must be tested. One can not rest in the company of comfortable agreement, which results in stagnation. Creativity tests these boundaries and potentially energizes these "fragile structures". Baer writes:

> Creative performances… result in fundamental changes in the nature of the domain in which the creator is working— such as changes in the way the domain itself is conceptualized, or changes in the options available to those who work and solve problems in that domain. (5-6)

Where does tradition function in this shifting postmodern milieu, in which we can see not only the comfortable boundaries of tradition but hints of the capacious vista beyond those boundaries. Nicolescu writes:

> An important point needs to be made at the very outset: the word 'tradition'… carries within it a contradiction charged with repercussions. In its primary familiar usage, the word 'tradition' signifies 'a way of thinking or acting inherited from the past'… In theatre, tradition represents an attempt at *mummification*, the preservation of external forms at all costs—inevitably concealing a corpse within, for any vital correspondence with the present moment is entirely absent. (par. 3)

From a distance, putting up a play seems like a clear process: starting with a script, working through a set and costumes, rehearsals, and finally performance. From the perspective of preserving— or mummifying— theatre, this is sufficient (Ibbotson and Darso 2008). Mark Bly, while discussing new play development, writes:

> A play is not a flat work of literature, not a description in poetry of another world but is in itself another world passing before you in time and space. The stage world never obeys the same rules as ours, because in its world, nothing else is possible besides what is there. (20)

What is "there" in the dark void of the blank stage? Where does the director find the spark of evolution in the ruins of precedence? According to Artaud:

> I say that the stage is a concrete physical space which asks to be filled, and to be given its own concrete language to speak. I say that this concrete language, intended for the senses and independent of speech, has to first satisfy the senses, that there is a poetry of the senses as there is a poetry of language, and that this concrete physical language to which I refer is truly theatrical only to the degree that the thoughts it expresses are beyond the reach of the spoken language. (37)

This must be what people are longing for when they speak of the *true* play as something that is neither the text nor what the audience observes.

Perhaps the longing is for the ideal form that expresses the character of the heart and the secrets of the intellect that are yet voiceless. According to Mayo:

> What binds people in theatre— certain ancient and social beliefs, which change over time. As a result, the meaning of a play may also evolve over time. For example, current audiences interpret theatre differently than ancient Greek audiences, because attitudes about gods, fates, and peoples' relationship to them have changed. (21)

The demanding search for true expression is relevant for the process of directing beautifully thread-bare plays loved by audiences. The director abides in atmosphere of the theatre and is the only arbiter of the final result of a play production. Claudel expounds on this critical point; he states:

> For we are not meant to carve out our destiny alone. We are slotted our place in an undertaking. We are needed to give a sort of undertaking. We are needed to give a sort of interpretation or intelligible account of the situation. We have been entrusted with the performance, together with partners who reveal themselves to us one after the other. (137)

The creative leadership of the liberal director finds boundaries and manages them through different approaches, such as using "artful capabilities and competencies" as well as "conceptualizing" and "innovation" (Ibbotson and Darso 2008). Creativity is, by its nature "divergent thinking" (Baer 12). Divergent thinking can offer many alternatives for the creator, but it can also engender disconcerting challenges for the creator (Baer 34). This allows for the value of the play to be "in the way it lives in relation to the present moment" in a way that is guided but not hampered by the text. With creativity inspired directing, changes such as "period, language, or even structure" may be allowed. Thus, a new genesis springs from the original (Benedetti 14-15).

Even Marowitz, who tends to cling to traditional concepts of directing, capitulates to liberating the director from the tradition of reenacting past productions when he writes:

> But no matter how strong the modern writer's claim to ownership… there is no denying the fact that in the case of certain classics, the imaginative creation of mise-en-scene is more pertinent than the play that gave it birth.

> I am thinking of productions such as Meyerhold's *Inspector General* or Orson Welles' *Julius Caesar* or Grotowsky's *Doctor Faustus*, where the creation of the production overmasters the text that inspired it. (16)

This view of supporting surprising results from known texts finds solid support in the work and writings of Claudel. He states:

> In real life, as we believe, people's characters explain their actions, whereas here the action is decided in advance, and the characters suggested by it. But once the general plot is established and each fictional character given his part in it, the author does not have the arbitrary and absolute authority over them that one would suppose. He is surprised himself by the independence they show, the advice they give him, and sometimes the absolute refusal to do as he asks. (34)

Here, Claudel is speaking of the unforeseen consequences of a script in production, the unexpected play that come to fill the void of "there".

What mattered about Brecht, a director and writer, and his work was that he knew how to combine his own purpose and innovations with the joy of theatre. Even in heavy moments. Brecht's sardonic play fills the stage. He is another example of a pioneer who sought new forms and autochthonous techniques. As a result, he contributed to the enduring development of the theatre's entire body of work. Brecht's 1924 production of his own adaptation of Marlow's *Edward the Second* was unusual in the Kammerspiele's history. Brecht took a record eight weeks to rehearse and revise the play even as it was being produced. He strove for perfection in the stylized expression of written ideas, sometimes frustrating actors and the supporting bureaucracy. Despite all of this, *Edward*

the Second was seminal in Brecht's development into a director who challenged convention, a writer of the seriously absurd, and a kind of prophet of the twentieth-century parable (Willet 149).

The significance of Brecht's work is that he proved that the director-creator was critical for theatre's development. Furthermore, his life-long experimentation led to more well-known works, such as *Mother Courage and Her Children* and evolved his epic theatre, which was Brecht's way of moving the body of work forward and challenging realism's reign (Willet 149).

If Brecht had received and followed the advice of so many current instructional books by authors whose aim it is to turn out theatre artists into paint-by-number directors, he would not have gone on to create his many groundbreaking productions, such as his daring production of *Breath*:

> Two identical recorded cries "frame" the action of *Breath.* An amplified recording of a slow inhalation followed by an exhalation is played simultaneously with a gradual increase and decrease of light on a littered stage… *Breath* is exactly scripted; there is nothing indeterminate about it… it is a performance without a performer. (Gaggi 82)

Had Brecht done what he "ought" to have done, consequent generations would have missed out on this and other forward-looking contributions, in which the stage was truly a new world to Brecht, who perpetually created his own universe and invited the spectator to join him in his unmapped land. Concerning his purpose for creating theatre, Brecht writes:

> For the sort of people who just come for fun and don't hesitate to keep

> their hats on at the theatre… The tribute we can pay the audience is to treat it as thoroughly intelligent. It is utterly wrong to treat people as simpletons when they are grown at seventeen. I appeal to the reason. (14)

A skeptic may believe that such an attitude is reckless or even dangerous to theatre; but if theatre were such a delicate creature, it would not have survived the alterations of thousands of years. According to Bentley, "If drama died easily it would be already dead" (16).

Since whatever theatrical form that is current quickly becomes imitated to the point at which it is common place, innovation must be pursued in order to avoid the stagnation that so often de rigueur in theatre. A director must question their own work, just as Brecht challenged naturalism and Brook disrupted the public's view of common theatrical forms. Relying on the fairy-tale that text is sacred and the director its servant will only perpetuate uninspired repetition. Theatre should pose questions and activate imaginations. Directors must have the courageous willingness and intellectual curiosity to challenge what is accepted in theatre (Bentley 92). This is what moves the body of work forward and makes theatre a living part of the human organism.

CHAPTER TWO

I. Given Circumstances

The given circumstances are the skeleton of the body of the play. According to Hodge:

> The given circumstances and dialogue frame the play just as deeply rooted pilings and a covering of glass and steel frame a modern skyscraper. The given circumstances resemble the deeply rooted base of the building— the substructure on which it is built, its foundation; and dialogue is the outer shell, the façade, the transparent encasement covering the activities that will go inside. (18)

While this analogy partially satisfies, it also begets questions. If, as Hodge states, "Dialogue is the only reliable source for given circumstances", which weighs heavier importance in analyzing a play (19)? It is like the old chicken and egg question— which comes first, the given circumstances or the dialogue?

A. Environment

1. Geographical Location

Ewa lives in Staten Island, one of the least desirable boroughs of New York, New York. Poland is also simultaneously the psychological location. Marek gives his impression of Ewa's neighborhood compared with his home in Poland; he states:

> I don't know what I expected… I expected more. I expected this city to look more like on television. This is nothing like MTV… trash on the sidewalk just like Poland, the people look just as miserable as they do

> back home. They only person who approached me with a smile, was the man who took my wallet. (Wlodarczyk A3)

From the beginning of Marek's visit, he judges the city of New York as dangerous compared with his Polish village. He indicts Ewa using biblically inspired language, "Have you forgotten your manners, living in Babylon so long? May I at least step in and warm up? The weather is vicious" (Wlodarczyk A8).

Zofia is no more forgiving of the living standards in New York than Marek is. A good indication of what it is like to live in Ewa's neighborhood comes from Zofia. She tries to convince Wacek to leave his mother's apartment; she states, "Remember what we left? We have a nice place… Living in my home is a bit different than this rat hole of a flat" (Wlodarczyk A21). There is also evidence that, in addition to living in a shabby apartment, Ewa is a renter rather than an owner. While deciding what to do with her interloping family, Ewa panics, "You can't stay here long. If my landlord knew, he'd raise my rent" (Wlodarczyk A13).

Despite Ewa living in New York for a decade and a half, she does not fully participate in life as a "New Yorker". The reality is that she lives in a sphere of her own creation, a postmodern environment in which she is able to exist in a segmented Polish speaking enclave. She can work, watch television, worship and socialize in her native tongue because of the phenomenon of the global village in which it is easy to move and easy to avoid assimilation (Grenz 18). When Zofia defends herself against Ewa's verbal blitz, Zofia states, "You can't even read a phonebook in English let alone Polish" (Wlodarczyk A23).

Indeed, Ewa has no reason to assimilate when she can comfortably thrive in a virtual little Poland in New York. She can even shape her daily habits, such as eating and drinking, according to her Polish customs. While Ewa is gone, Zofia gathers food and drink for Wacek and Marek; Zofia states, "Your mother knows how to shop. There's everything from back home" (Wlodarczyk A14). Wacek, Zofia, and Marek all seem quite sated by Polish favorites, such as "torte" and "sausages" (Wlodarczyk A14). When Wacek and Zofia prepare for an evening out in the city, Zofia tempts Marek and Wacek with another common favorite from home— vodka. She proposes, "Let's all have a drink before we leave. I found good vodka…not the cheap stuff" (Wlodarczyk A20). At least in terms of food, Ewa comfortably recreates Poland. At the end of *Diaspora*, Marek presents her with her favorite Polish candy. Ewa responds by showing him an identical box of candy and acidly responds, "I can buy anything here" (Wlodarczyk A30). She means that she does not need Marek to recreate Poland for her, when she has all of the accouterments of Polish cultural in New York without having to be in Poland.

2. Date

The date of *Diaspora* is "a bitter January evening in 2005". The month of January is significant because it is the nadir of winter. The streets are gray with battered snow. Holiday decorations are gone and the parties are over. Grim January hesitantly welcomes the nascent year. Marek and Ewa indicate the inclement weather in their dialogue. Marek's first words to Ewa are, "Have you forgotten your manners, living in Babylon so long? May I at least step in and warm up? The weather is vicious". Ewa responds, "You should have a warmer coat" (Wlodarczyk A8).

The year 2005 is pivotal because Ewa's own solitary "diaspora" from Poland was fifteen years earlier, which corresponds with the crumbling of the Soviet Union. It is at this point it would have been comparatively easier for Ewa to get a visa than it would have been before the end of the Soviet era. Although the script does not enumerate the reasons Marek waited to come to New York, it is possible that the entire family was not granted a visa at the same time. It is common knowledge that immediately after the Soviet era, visas for complete family units were difficult to obtain in order to avoid the decline in the population of working people. Ewa comments on the unjustified length of Marek's unexplained absence. She states:

> I asked my husband to visit—to stay—years ago. I asked and I asked. I waited and I waited. Now, Mr. Eleventh Hour thinks he'll be the knight in dented armor and save the dying damsel. I don't want to be saved by someone who could not be bothered to move his ass for fifteen years. (Wlodarczyk A13)

3. Economic Environment

Differences in economics are one cause of conflict in *Diaspora* (Hodge 20). Ewa and Marek have never escaped from their working-class origins. Ewa describes the financial situation in her family. Ewa tells Wacek, "I took care of you from here. The new shoes every season, the tutoring lessons, I slaved away so you learn to believe in nothing. The sacrifice I made— " (Wlodarczyk A12). When it is obvious that Wacek and Zofia do not understand the kind of hard physical labor and financial difficulty Marek and Ewa have endured in their life, Marek defends Ewa by saying:

> People say a lot of things and you don't always know why they say them. Some people have nothing better to do than judge. She had a hard life. You kids don't know what it is to have a hard, hungry life. You don't know, so don't assume what you don't know. (Wlodarczyk A19)

Wacek has chosen to emancipate himself through education. Ewa thinks she is helping by finding him a job at a car wash. Zofia defends Wacek by saying, "Surely he's qualified for something better. He has a master's degree in philosophy". Ewa sharply responds, "How stupid of me. I should have asked Socrates if he had any job openings. The cash tips will be worth it" (Wlodarczyk A22).

Zofia was born to a comfortable level of wealth and status and can not comprehend the economic adversity Marek, Ewa, and Wacek have experienced (Hodge 20). This, however, does not mean that she is unable to surmise the manipulative situation in Ewa's family. When Zofia defends Wacek against Ewa's attempt to dictate their professional lives, Zofia states "The work is not good enough for him. He deserves more than your crumbs" (Wlodarczyk A22). Unlike Wacek and Marek, Zofia feels no debt, either psychological or financial, to Ewa. Zofia resists Ewa's attempt to drag Zofia down to a working class job; she initially refuses to work as a maid because she is proud of her degree in engineering. Ewa tartly responds, "—and I'm trained as a ballerina. If you want an engineering job, go to India. Here, people clean, sell things, or fix things that are made elsewhere" (Wlodarczyk A22). Zofia becomes exasperated with the dismal poverty of the apartment and the manipulations of Ewa. Zofia still has expectations of a comfortable standard of living. She continues to think of the trip to New York as temporary visit instead of a permanent move. Zofia insists:

> Wacek, I can't stay. I'm thinking about a mint on my pillow, fresh white towels and breakfast delivered by room service. Just like the resort we visited when we went skiing. That was perfect. Remember? (Wlodarczyk A28)

The fact that Ewa became the major economic caretaker once she arrived in the United States modifies many of the interdependent interactions in her family. It was Marek and her mother who took care of the primary childrearing, while Ewa sent money home. Although Wacek resents her for relinquishing her nurturing function as a mother, Ewa expects to retain her influence over her son and defends her choice when she states, "I took care of you from here. The new shoes every season, the tutoring lessons, I slaved away so you could learn to believe in nothing. The sacrifice I made" (Wlodarczyk A12).

Despite feeling resentment, Marek and Wacek feel indebted and accountable to Ewa. Ewa certainly wants them to remember her financial contribution and, as a result, preserve a measure of maternal influence and control. Zofia, however, challenges Ewa's sovereignty. After Ewa has repeatedly provoked her, Zofia confronts Ewa and tells Wacek and Marek what they do not wish to admit, "You think you're almost done with her. Then you remember how hard life was for her and she wins again. Life is hard for everyone" (Wlodarczyk A23).

4. Social Environment

The social environment of Ewa's family is a muddle of expectations based on their common religion (Catholicism), the tension of a prolonged separation, the family's financial expectations of each other, divergent concepts of marriage and class differences between Zofia and the others. A supplementary interference is the mixed etiquette of the

group, which includes Ewa, an expatriate fully reconciled to New York mores, and her nuclear family, fresh from Poland. There are further differences in the social expectations of Zofia, Marek, and Wacek. Wacek expects Zofia to obey him in front of his parents. Zofia expects Wacek to entertain her and protect her around his family. Marek expects both Wacek and Zofia to respect him as the leader of the family— or at least the leader of the trip to New York. Likewise, they each carry their own presumptions about Ewa and what they will get out of their abrupt visit (Hodge 20). These tensions lead to the family drama of Ewa's clan; in the words of Claudel:

> The passionate longing for individual happiness in which the most austere of philosophies recognizes not only the mainspring but the legitimate aspiration of all our energies; conscious and unconscious; and on the other hand, the external necessity to which this desire has to adapt itself. When these two forces come into conflict, there is a problem to solve, and a solution to find; there is drama. If there is no conflict, there is nothing to settle. (137)

Marek, on a quest to "rescue" Ewa, perceives New York culture to be a kind of portentous underworld compared with the sheltered familiarity of home, even with all its flaws (Booker 83). Marek goes so far as to call New York "Babylon", and immediately gives Ewa's lenient social environment some credit for her current situation (Wlodarczyk A8). In Marek's eyes, Ewa is like the fair Persephone, stranded in a dark perdition, and it is his vocation to alleviate Ewa's predicament (Booker 83). Marek feels that Ewa has been further corrupted by the postmodern composite of American influences (Grenz 35). It is straightforward from the onset of their jinxed reunion that Ewa's sexual and social

life in New York has unwelcome implications for her entrenched relationship with Marek. Ewa states:

> The church would not even fault you. That was not the mailman. Would you like the truth? I'll tell you everything about every one of them. There have been many men. I even forgot some of their names. When I arrived in New York years ago, men would miss their subway stop to be near me a little longer. I was like the Siren, drawing them to me. I felt some kind of raw power. (Wlodarczyk A29)

They have been separated for a decade and a half, and yet they remain legally married. She is repetitively clear with Marek about her desire to divorce, yet he continues his objecting to divorce. This tension is the crux of the story. According to Beneditti:

> In traditional plays, there will be a central relationship through which the main conflict flows: it is usually the central relationship which contains the seed of conflict. The characters involved in this central relationship are mutually interdependent… even in a play without an antagonist and protagonist in conflict, there is a central relationship of mutually defined characters who act together to bring about the action. (54)

She tries reasoning, outright rejection, and religious arguments, but Marek is firm in his resolution to stay married *and* resolve their differences. Marek asserts:

> You are flesh and soul in my hands. If you and I—if we are not true, then I am a lie. You are my covenant. You are my compass, my north and south. Where can I go, where you will not haunt me? If you abandon me now, I

will die before you, even if they bury you first. If only you'd waited—

(Wlodarczyk A30)

Ewa does not wish to be saved nor does she think that Marek deserves credit as the noble defender. She feels she has carried the bulk of the financial burden in the family. When Zofia tries to keep Wacek from working at a menial job, Ewa uses this opportunity to insult Marek. Ewa tells Zofia, "You should be grateful to have a husband willing to support his household" (Wlodarczyk A22). Ewa does not wish to play the romantic lead in Marek's delusional fairytale. She is doing fine in the socially permissive pastiche that is New York and can do without her "knight in dented armor" (Wlodarczyk A13).

5. Religious Environment

The religious customs of Ewa's family are Catholic. The degree to which the characters adhere to the teachings of the Catholic Church varies. At the end of the spectrum is Wacek, who marries Zofia in the Catholic Church for the sake of traditions even though he considers himself an atheist and sometimes a humanist, depending on his mood. Zofia is peacefully "non-practicing", but she does not exhibit the same utopian irritation that Wacek does. Despite their shared disbelief, Wacek and Zofia married in the Catholic Church. Marek explains, "Her parents insisted on a church wedding, even though both of them are non-practicing" (Wlodarczyk A25).

Ewa seriously considers herself Catholic. Ewa regularly attends and volunteers at her local parish, displays a crucifix in her apartment, and tries to attain a fair divorce from her husband. When she tries to expel Kasper from her apartment, she truthfully explains, "I have an alter guild meeting at church" (Wlodarczyk A4). While on the phone with a

priest from her parish, she says, "Actually, I was going to be there this evening, but you know that. Someone from the alter guild goes every Friday night…" (Wlodarczyk A8).

Ewa's autonomous life in the United States is full of juxtaposition; she is a sexual libertarian in her heart, but a devout Catholic in her soul. She uses the Catholic Church's own edicts on adultery to reason with Marek. "The church would not even fault you. That was not the mailman. Would you like the truth?" she deliberates with Marek (Wlodarczyk A29). Marek, however, takes the idea of a Catholic marriage seriously, no matter how much time has passed or what indiscretions have occurred. Marek desperately bargains, "I can't listen. I can forgive those desperate years… I still reach across the bed to your pillow, expecting to see you" (Wlodarczyk A30). Marek considers their bound numinous and sealed by the church. Regarding the divorce papers he has repeatedly refused, he avers, "I won't sign. I won't break a true marriage." He uses religious language when he is speaking to Ewa about their marriage; he calls her his "covenant" (Wlodarczyk A29-A30).

B. Previous Action

Fifteen years ago, Ewa left Poland for New York. It is plain that there had been some agreement for Marek to follow Ewa. She states:

> I asked my husband to visit—to stay—years ago. I asked and I asked. I waited and I waited. Now, Mr. Eleventh Hour thinks he'll be the knight in dented armor and save the dying damsel. I don't want to be saved by someone who could not be bothered to move his ass for fifteen years. (Wlodarczyk A13)

In the interim, Marek lived with Wacek and his mother-in-law in a destitute Polish village. Marek describes life with his mother-in-law to Ewa. He states:

> Leaving me with your mother was the worst wound you inflicted… She will outlast Armageddon. When the world has shattered into bits she will be floating like a monolithic planet. (Wlodarczyk A29)

The reason Marek stayed behind in Poland is not specified, but can be deduced from the script: the need to supervise Wacek, the legal need to obtain visas, or perhaps financial difficulty. One of the reasons Ewa left the village was to lift the family out of poverty. In an argument with Marek, she explains, "I would have died in that god-forsaken village…Watching you drink away our future every name day…Watching you sit on the stoop with your useless friends and the stray cats" (Wlodarczyk A30). There is no evidence in the dialogue that Ewa was unfaithful to Marek when they were young, married, and living in the village; however, as a young woman, Ewa had a "reputation". Marek defends Ewa against Wacek's invectives; he states, "You weren't there, when we were young, how magnificent she was. You don't know why jealous people say…" (Wlodarczyk A19). It is evident from Wacek's statements that marriage did not quell the invidious local stories about Ewa's rebellious exploits. Wacek explains the stories he heard about his mother. He verbally assaults his mother:

> Mother, I am not a puppet. What has your religion done for you? … You aren't exactly canonized. When you left, it took me years to live down your reputation— the speculation and gossip. They said you left because of the butcher. Someone else said you left to get an abortion. Somebody else said Dad kicked you out. I tried to defend you, but the names… I was

> a kid, what was I supposed to do? Should I have been philosophical about other boys calling my mother the whore of the village? Do you think new shoes from America make up for that? (Wlodarczyk A13)

While defiantly bickering with Wacek, Marek desperately defends Ewa:

> People say a lot of things and you don't always know why they say them. Some people have nothing better to do than judge. She had a hard life. You kids don't know what it is to have a hard, hungry life. You don't know, so don't assume what you don't know. (Wlodarczyk A19)

At some undetermined time before Ewa left Poland, Ewa and Marek were happy, according to Marek's opening monologue. Marek states:

> She will come home and live with me again and it will be as if we're young and beautiful and whole. She will bring me breakfast and I will bring her wild flowers from the woods. (Wlodarczyk A3)

From the age of ten, Wacek grew up without Ewa. After fifteen years, Ewa is shocked to see her son as a mature adult. She tries to charm Wacek. "Darling, you look wonderful. So grown up," she says (Wlodarczyk A11). Wacek, unsure about his mother, remains placid. He replies, "That's usually how it goes. No way to get around it" (Wlodarczyk A11). Ewa's mother took on the traditional maternal duties in Ewa's absence. Ewa quizzes Wacek about how his worship habits have changed and why he no longer attends mass. Wacek responds, "I was ten. I didn't have a choice. Where Grandma goes, we all must follow" (Wlodarczyk A12).

Ewa has always financially supported the family from her earnings in New York, which has never mitigated Wacek's umbrage. In an argument, Wacek indicts Ewa:

> I was a kid, what was I supposed to do? Should I have been philosophical about other boys calling my mother the whore of the village? Do you think new shoes from America make up for that? (Wlodarczyk A13)

Before Wacek arrives at Ewa's apartment, he completes his degree in philosophy and marries the well-born Zofia. His motivation for joining Marek's journey to New York is to take his bride to a place where Zofia's prominent parents will not dominate their lives. Wacek explains to Zofia, "We all know your parents live well. We're starting over, you and me, in a new city, the premiere city. We are staying" (Wlodarczyk A21).

The previous action immediately before the opening of the play occurs in two places: outside Ewa's apartment and inside Ewa's apartment. Marek buys new clothes in preparation, which is a financial sacrifice. Wacek wounds his father's vanity when he calls the treasured suit a "straight jacket" (Wlodarczyk A19). Zofia, Marek, and Wacek travel via plane and taxi to reach Ewa's home. In his opening monologue, Marek refers to their travels when he says, "Look at my shoes. They are scuffed. Ewa hates shoddy shoes. I should have polished them at the airport, but everything costs so much here" (Wlodarczyk A3). Wacek and Zofia go shopping at the airport. Wacek refers to Zofia's new outfit later in the play when they plan a night in the city; Wacek says to Zofia, "Wear the outfit we bought at the airport" (Wlodarczyk A18). Promptly before Marek's monologue, he is arguing with the taxi driver, who seems to take advantage of overwrought Marek. Marek states:

> You kids go ahead. I'll pay for the taxi. Fifty dollars. I didn't ask for a tour of New York. You could have told me you charged for directions before

> I…Take it, take it, take it…I'm never taking a taxi again. When I have Ewa back to Poland, we'll walk the entire way. (Wlodarczyk A3)

Inside Ewa's boudoir, Ewa and Kasper finish their own denouement, and Kasper lingers as Ewa prepares for her weekly Friday night Alter Guild meeting. Ewa dismisses Kasper, "I don't mean to rush you, but… Actually I do mean to rush you" (Wlodarczyk A3).

C. Polar Attitudes

In the life of a play, a character's evolution is bound up within the action of the play. This allows the audience to discern the psychological place the characters begin and follow them to the end of their journey in overcoming their obstacles. Hodge writes, "All plays are about revolt of some sort, about a character's overthrow of or submission to the restrictions that have fenced him in" (319). The polar attitude shift can be examined even deeper, ranging from the internal psychological changes that manifest in outer changes. Thomas incisively states, "*Recognition*, according to Aristotle, is a change from ignorance to knowledge on the part of a character… the most effective kind of recognition is accompanied by a reversal, or drastic change of fortune" (148) All four major characters in *Diaspora* experience this harrowing metamorphosis.

1. Marek

In the beginning of *Diaspora*, Marek has finally overcome the hindrances that kept him from Ewa for so many years, as described in "Previous Action". In his opening monologue, Marek declares his determination to remake the present without the onus of the past despite all undeniable evidence to the contrary. He states:

> Whatever is shattered, I will put together again. I don't care what doctors say. Doctor's only cut you and poison you… She will live, live to be a

> wise old woman—with me. We will sit on the porch together and watch the centuries pass, forever and ever. She will come home and live with me again and it will be as if we're young and beautiful and whole. (Wlodarczyk A3)

Ewa is unyielding to his verbosely earnest attempts to reconcile. After many caustic arguments have passed and Zofia and Wacek have left for the night, Marek is finally alone with Ewa. He finally comes to understand that reconciliation necessitates that both sides make reasonable concessions in the interest of domestic peace. He tenderly acknowledges that certain aspects of Ewa's disposition may not change, even if they do reach a marital truce. Marek states:

> All I'm asking is that you don't kick me out tonight. I stay here, on the couch or chair, your choice. You don't have to take me back; just don't kick me out, because I'm not leaving tonight. You have two hundred channels and I've only seen eleven of them. Let's be civil. Tonight, we're not mad. Tonight, you're not sick. We'll have a little cake, a little coffee. (Wlodarczyk A31)

Likewise, Marek has his own weaknesses, including his preferred anodyne of alcohol; he is also not likely to change at his age and Ewa knows this. Ewa describes his past behavior, "Watching you drink away our future every name day…Watching you sit on the stoop with your useless friends and the stray cats" (Wlodarczyk A30). They have both become the flawed but interesting people they are. Marek still hopes they may reunite. He has the hope of a mythical hero on a hazardous pursuit; in his poem "Ulysses", Tennyson writes:

Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'

We are not now that strength which in old days

Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are. (65-67)

When Ewa and Marek are discussing how they like their coffee, they reach a fragile peace with this mutual understanding. In the particular context of their bargaining, Marek's polar attitude shift occurs when he says of his coffee preference, "I like mine sweet and corrupted" (Wlodarczyk A31). This represents his willingness to accept that Ewa has transformed since he last saw her. He wants to get to know her again, in the hope that they might find promising common ground.

2. Ewa

At the inception of *Diaspora*, Ewa is compelled to deal with her relationship to her nuclear family and the issue of her marriage to Marek, because her family surprises her at her front door. Standing and waiting to be welcomed, Marek glibly states, "I promised. Here I am" (Wlodarczyk A8). Throughout *Diaspora*, Marek is striving for a rapprochement with Ewa. She appears to resist with any maneuver she can to thwart Marek's heartfelt petitions. She harshly judges him as the reprobate husband who drank away their limited income. She challenges Marek as he stands at the door, "I don't know whether to beat you or invite you in for coffee— I'm more inclined to the former…I definitely set my mind on the beating" (Wlodarczyk A9). She tolerates Marek's company so she can remain near her unforgiving son, Wacek, and satisfy her curiosity about Zofia, the interloping new daughter-in-law. Ewa sees her former husband as the bane that has disturbed her formerly independent and peaceful life. Among the many means she uses to repel Marek, her favored weapon is truth. She comments:

> You don't want me anymore. I'm past my expiration date. Besides, I've been more than patient. I sent you the divorce papers and you pretend they didn't arrive. (Wlodarczyk A29)

Marek bargains with her. He negotiates:

> All I'm asking is that you don't kick me out tonight. I stay here, on the couch or chair, your choice. You don't have to take me back; just don't kick me out, because I'm not leaving tonight. You have two hundred channels and I've only seen eleven of them. Let's be civil. Tonight, we're not mad. Tonight, you're not sick. We'll have a little cake, a little coffee. (Wlodarczyk A31)

In the process of her polar attitude shift, she cautiously accepts the offer, but tells him in veiled language that she has indubitably changed during their long separation. She acquiesces to his limited request by following hospitality customs and offering him coffee. She makes a significant concession when she admits that she remembers the intimate detail of how he takes his coffee. "Fine. Do you still take your coffee with sugar?" Ewa asks (Wlodarczyk A31). Ewa, however, indicates that her coffee habits have changed, symbolic of other changes that have occurred within her during her pilgrimage to recreate herself. She smoothly indicates to Marek that he should expect more changes. Ewa expresses her polar attitude shift when she aptly states, "Now I drink my coffee black— people here like it strong and bitter" (Wlodarczyk A31). Despite her earlier refusals, she tacitly agrees to negotiate with Marek, but advises him that the process will be arduous.

3. Wacek

Wacek has the most difficult trip of all of the characters. His last personal interaction with Ewa was at the age of ten; their delicate bond is based on whatever turmoil occurred fifteen years ago. Wacek states, "I was ten. I didn't have a choice" (Wlodarczyk A14). Wacek, who doggedly prides himself on being bold and honest, vacillates between behaving like a petulant child and behaving like an angry adolescent in the presence of formidable Ewa, resulting in Wacek's unbridled rants (Wlodarczyk A13-A14). He begins *Diaspora* mistakenly thinking he can quickly pay homage to his alienated mother and forever leave behind the problems of his accursed parents. He commands Zofia, "We're starting over, you and me, in a new city, the premiere city. We are staying" (Wlodarczyk A21). Marek, his father, knows that Wacek's anticipated metamorphosis will be more painful than Wacek realizes. Marek prudently advises his son, "When you are your age, you think you have the time to tear apart and rebuild. Destruction seems so damn seductive" (Wlodarczyk A16). His perplexing polar attitude shift occurs when he decides that he will take on the exigent tasks of helping his parents through a burdensome time, while negotiating a possibly banal blue-collar life with Zofia until they can find secure employment up to Zofia's standards. Instead of fighting his disconcerting complications, he has courageously resolved to work through them like the grown man he has become. Wacek expresses this polar attitude shift when he states:

> I will be different. I will never be anyone's fool. I shape life by the force of my will. I will not be a victim to weak philosophy that can only create slaves. I will be the master of my life. I will be aware of every second of my brief existence— that was our bus. That was our bus. Zofia hurry up,

> we just missed the bus and we can't afford a taxi… Fine, we'll take a taxi. (Wlodarczyk A31)

Even though Wacek is still pompous, he confirms that he is going to take responsibility for his and Zofia's life in New York. He also realizes that he may need to make occasional concessions— such as a taxi for Zofia.

4. Zofia

Zofia expects a propitious start to life with Wacek. When she arrives in New York, she optimistically thinks that the visit with Ewa will be an ephemeral dilemma, briefly interrupting her momentum towards a contented lifetime with her beloved Wacek. She blithely answers questions from suspicious Ewa, such as what she does for a living. "For a living?" Zofia responds; she is perplexed that she must define herself by a wage (Wlodarczyk A10). Eventually Ewa's verbal jabs become too great to tolerate. "My degree was in engineering. And what do you do? Wait, Wacek told me all about you. You're a maid?" Zofia coolly responds (Wlodarczyk A10). After many family arguments have passed, she hysterically implores in a discouraged tantrum aimed at Wacek:

> This is an emergency. Fine, we'll save our money go stay with the homeless people in a shelter. I hear they feed you soup and give you a blanket. Please, take me anywhere but here… Give them a couple of days to self-destruct and we can take care of the sole survivor… Remember what we left? (Wlodarczyk A21)

Zofia gradually progresses to the point at which she is not willing to be shamefully subjugated by Ewa. She brazenly accepts the ultimatum from Ewa, the anathema of her future hopes. Before leaving for an evening out, provokes Ewa, "We don't want to be out

too late. After all, we start work early tomorrow" (Wlodarczyk A23). Her independent actions imply that she will give the uncertainties of life with Wacek in New York a chance, rather than retreating home defeated. After Zofia's full-blown tantrum refusing to stay in Ewa's hostile apartment, Wacek decides that he and Zofia will remain and appeases Zofia with the promise of a fun evening. Wacek says, "We'll stay where I say we stay. Now, let's go out to dinner. You'll feel better after a bottle of chardonnay". Zofia makes her polar attitude shift when she agrees to his plan. "— Half a bottle of chardonnay. Alright" (Wlodarczyk A28). Zofia's polar attitude shift is reaffirmed with her comforting embrace of Wacek (Wlodarczyk A31) showing him that she fully supports his desire as he earlier stated, "We're starting over, you and me, in a new city, the premiere city. We are staying" (Wlodarczyk A21).

II. Dialogue

A. Choice of Words

1) MAREK. "Buddy" (A3) is an example of casual American slang.
2) MAREK. "Shoddy shoes" (A3) refers to old shoes that look ragged.
3) MAREK. "King" (A3) refers to the chief monarch of a kingdom.
4) MAREK. "Black cats" (A3) refers to the superstition that having a black cat cross your path results in bad luck.
5) MAREK. "Evil eye" (A3) is an ancient and persistent superstition that an envious or malevolent look with ill intent can cause harm to a person.
6) MAREK. "Wild flowers" (A3) refers to flowers that grow freely and indigenously in a spacious habitat.

7) MAREK. "MTV" (A3) is a cable television station, which was the dominant conduit for music videos in past decades.

8) MAREK. "Marrow" (A3) means the essence of something.

9) MAREK. "Sinew" (A3) means power or strength.

10) EWA. "Alter guild" (A4) refers to a volunteer organization at a church that organizes the appearance and the alter decorations in church.

11) KASPER. "Poetry" (A4) means having the lyrical and graceful qualities of poetry.

12) EWA. "Bastard" (A4) refers to a despicable and disingenuous person.

13) KASPER. "Loan" (A4) refers to money temporarily given with the expectation that it will be returned.

14) EWA. "Legal resident" (A5) refers to having the status of living and working legally in the United States without being a citizen.

15) EWA. "Parasite lawyer" (A5) is a form of popular antagonistic conceptions of attorneys.

16) EWA. "Bankrupt" (A5) describes a person unable to pay debts.

17) EWA. "I.R.S." (A5) refers to the omnipotent government bureau that collects taxes.

18) KASPER. "Dr. Phil" (A5), who is the spawn of Oprah, is a celebrated American psychologist and author on television.

19) EWA. "Dumped" (A6) is slang for rejecting a person of romantic interest and expelling them from one's life.

20) EWA. "Terminal" (A6) means that a condition is fixed for a certain amount of time and will end.

21) KASPER. "Pure and repentant" (A6) indicates behavior that is wholesome and contrite.

22) KASPER. "Soul mate" (A7) refers the idea that two people, among the billions of people in the world, can be meant only for each other.

23) KASPER. "Pop psychology" (A7) refers to the ubiquitous and surface concepts of psychology that have saturated American culture.

24) KASPER. "Vice" (A7) is a habit of depravity.

25) EWA. "Spare key" (A7) refers to a person's extra key, which gives access to their home and life.

26) EWA. "Sexual overture" (A8) is an effort to seduce another person.

27) EWA. "Fire" (A8) refers to dismissing a person from a job or responsibility.

28) EWA. "Volunteer" (A8) refers to a person who works for free for an organization.

29) MAREK. "Babylon" (A8) According to Dictionary.com, "Babylon" is "any rich and magnificent city believed to be a place of excessive luxury and wickedness".

30) MAREK. "Right" (A8) refers to having justifiable dominion over someone or something.

31) MAREK. "Wedding" (A8) refers to a ceremony sealing a marriage.

32) MAREK. "House" (A8) refers to the permanent home a family occupies.

33) MAREK. "Fate" (A9) is the concept that results in life are beyond an individual's determination.

34) MAREK. "Mailman" (A9) a term for a person who delivers the mail, is also the subject of sexual jokes.

35) EWA. "Lottery" (A9) refers to a common and affordable gambling game.

36) EWA. "Living" (A10) refers to the daily activities of working for everyday needs.

37) ZOFIA "Maid" (A10) refers to a person who cleans and serves for a living.

38) ZOFIA "Luggage" (A10) refers to the personal belongings a person keeps with them when they travel and indicates the kind of trip they are taking.

39) WACEK. "Civil ceremony" (A11) refers to the secular marriage ceremony performed at a courthouse.

40) MAREK. "Claw" (A11) refers to the physical action of a cat's claws scratching.

41) WACEK. "Humanist" (A12) refers to "a person who follows a form of scientific or philosophical humanism", which is a belief in reason and science over faith (Dictionary.com).

42) WACEK. "Realist" (A12) refers to a person who values the practical and material over the abstract.

43) WACEK. "Sacrament" (A12) refers to sacred rites of the Catholic Church.

44) WACEK. "Voodoo" (A12) refers to cult practices of sorcery.

45) WACEK. "Hired help" (A12) indicates servants who take care of the domestic burdens of others.

46) EWA. "Sacrifice" (A12) denotes the Ewa's hard work and wages spent on her son, Wacek.

47) WACEK. "Puppet" (A12) signifies someone who is controlled by others.

48) WACEK. "Canonized" (A13) refers to a person who is deemed saintly by the Catholic Church.

49) WACEK. "Whore" (A13) refers to a woman who is perceived to be exceptionally promiscuous.

50) WACEK. "Abortion" (A13) refers to medically and legally ending a pregnancy, which is against Catholic doxies that determine the start of life is at conception.

51) EWA. "Vacation" (A13) indicates travel or respite away from daily routine.

52) EWA. "Visit" (A13) conveys a temporary stay.

53) EWA. "Mr. Eleventh Hour" (A13) refers to Marek, who claims Ewa after an inordinate amount of time has passed.

54) EWA. "Knight in dented armor" (A13) indicates a chivalrous man with obvious flaws.

55) EWA. "Dying damsel" (A13) refers to high-born lady; "dying" indicates she is ill.

56) MAREK. "Channels" (A14) convey the choices of television stations.

57) MAREK. "Kitchen" (A14) indicates the room in a home where meals are cooked and served, also where families spend significant time together.

58) MAREK. "Lingerie" (A14) refers to a woman's intimate apparel.

59) MAREK. "Secrets" (A14) refers to privileged information not meant to be shared.

60) MAREK. "Chess set" (A14) refers to the physical board and pieces of this ancient game.

61) ZOFIA. "Fire escape" (A15) refers to a common escape route on apartment buildings, a metal staircase allowing escape.

62) MAREK. "Bedroom" (A15) refers to an area of private retreat and rest.

63) WACEK. "Epiphany" (A15) refers to a sudden discernment of meaning.

64) MAREK. "American women" (A15) refers to women from the United States who holds the mores of the culture.

65) MAREK. "Oprah" (A15) is an omnipresent media celebrity with inescapable influence in American culture.

66) WACEK. "Farce" (A15) specifies behaving in a way that allows people to be exploited by external events and ideas.

67) WACEK. "Marionettes" (A15) refers to people behaving like puppets, controlled by others.

68) WACEK. "Scoundrels" (A16) refers to deceitful miscreants.

69) WACEK. "Saints" (A16) indicates people who live in an exemplary and honorable manner.

70) WACEK. "Molecules" (A16) refers to any small particle.

71) MAREK. "Atoms" (A16) refers to the smallest complete units of any element.

72) MAREK. "Randomness" (A16) refers to patterns of chaos in the natural world.

73) WACEK. "Nature" (A16) refers to the biological functions of reproducing and populating the human race.

74) MAREK. "Mute" (A16) refers to the inability to speak.

75) MAREK. "Cat" (A16) refers an independent but domesticated animal.

76) MAREK. "She-devil" (A16) refers to a wicked woman with a mean disposition.

77) MAREK. "Livestock" (A17) indicates animals kept on farms or in other bucolic settings.

78) MAREK. "Horse" (A17), an example of "livestock", is an animal that requires taming and training so they perform complicated tasks.

79) MARK. "Sheep" (A17), another example of "livestock", are animals that are known to be easily coerced and require supervision so they will not harm themselves.

80) MAREK. "Taxi" (A18) refers to a private form of transportation for which the passenger pays for individual convenience.

81) MAREK. "Bus" (A18) refers to an affordable form of public transportation for the masses.

82) MAREK. "Butler" (A18) is a male servant who is responsible the domestic order of the household.

83) MAREK. "Evidence" (A18) refers to facts that prove a belief or theory.

84) MAREK. "Postcard" (A18) refers to a personal form of communication, a specially selected card sent to friend or relative.

85) WACEK. "Wedding ring" (A19) refers to the gold band that is given at a marriage ceremony.

86) MAREK. "Second-hand couch" (A19) refers to the central piece of living room furniture bought already used.

87) WACEK. "Straight jacket" (A19) refers to a type of jacket that restricts the movements of a crazy or dangerous person.

88) MAREK. "Nice things" (A19) refers to precious possessions that bestow pleasure to the owner.

89) MAREK. "New clothes" (A19) refers to a person investing money and time in their appearance.

90) MAREK. "New wine" (A19) refers to new clothing.

91) MAREK. "Old skins" (A19) refers to Marek's physical body.

92) MAREK. "Investment" (A20) refers to anything that gives the owner a return or profit.

93) ZOFIA. "Good vodka" (A20) refers to the celebratory strong drink, which, in this case, is of high caliber.

94) MAREK. "Well-cut suit" (A20) indicates a costly and meticulously made men's suit.

95) MAREK. "Well-built woman" (A20) indicates a woman with an attractive figure.

96) ZOFIA. "Atheist" (A20) refers to a person who does not believe in the existence of any god.

97) WACEK. "Senses" (A20) refers to the faculties that allow a person to perceive the world: sight, sound, and touch.

98) WACEK. "Skin" (A20) refers to the integument of a person's body.

99) WACEK. "Soul" (A20) refers to the idea that a person has a spirit that outlasts the mortal limits of the physical body.

100) ZOFIA. "Hotel" (A20) refers to a place of temporary accommodations for tourists.

101) ZOFIA. "Homeless people" (A21) refers to people who live on the streets or in shelters.

102) ZOFIA. "Shelter" (A21) refers to charitable refuges offering temporary asylum.

103) ZOFIA. "Emergency" (A21) refers to a crisis requiring prompt action.

104) ZOFIA. "Self-destruct" (A21) refers to people harming themselves in internecine conflict.

105) ZOFIA. "Sole survivor" (A21) refers to only remaining victor in a battle.

106) ZOFIA. "Rat hole" (A21) refers to the squalid dwelling of invasive rodents.

107) ZOFIA. "Escaped" (A21) refers to eluding a threatening situation.

108) EWA. "Favor" (A21) refers to something done as a courtesy to a friend.

109) EWA. "Socrates" (A22) was an ancient Greek philosopher.

110) ZOFIA. "Master's degree in philosophy" (A22) refers to an advanced graduate degree.

111) EWA. "Ballerina" (A22) indicates a professional ballet dancer.

112) ZOFIA. "Engineer" (A22) refers to a person trained in the practical science of building machines or buildings.

113) EWA. "India" (A22) refers to one of many developing economic environments where companies are moving jobs.

114) ZOFIA. "Crumbs" (A22) refers to receiving less than a person deserves.

115) EWA. "Princess" (A22) refers to a titled daughter in a royal family.

116) ZOFIA. "Fallow" (A23) refers to wasted opportunity that is left uncultivated.

117) ZOFIA. "Calluses" (A23) refers to skin made rough and thick from physical labor.

118) ZOFIA. "Weapon" (A23) refers to anything used against a rival.

119) MAREK. "Puritan" (A23) refers to a person who is unreasonable severe in moral affairs.

120) EWA. "Company" (A24) refers to welcomed guests in a home.

121) MAREK. "Peace" (A24) refers to a condition of serenity.

122) MAREK. "Unborn" (A24) refers to the state of never having been born.

123) MAREK. "Silence" (A24) refers to the state of being forgotten.

124) MAREK. "Tomb" (A24) refers to the chamber where a dead body rests.

125) EWA. "Ghost" (A24) refers to a spirit that haunts the living.

126) EWA. "Will" (A24) refers to consciousness of a person that transforms thought into action.

127) EWA. "Bristle and hiss" (A24) refers to the way a cat behaves when annoyed.

128) MAREK. "Warsaw" (A25) refers to the capital of Poland.

129) MAREK. "Dacha" (A25) refers to an Eastern European vacation home.

130) MAREK. "Devotee" (A25) refers to a person who is zealously devoted to an idea or movement.

131) MAREK. "Transcendentalism" (A25) is a philosophy accentuating the spiritual over the physical.

132) MAREK. "Headmaster" (A25) refers to the administrator in charge of a private school.

133) MAREK. "Field trip" (A25) refers to a supervised journey for students for the purpose of learning.

134) EWA. "Cruel fairy tales" (A26) refers to stories with cryptic meanings told to children.

135) WACEK. "Raised from the dead" (A28) refers to a person being dead and then becoming alive.

136) EWA. "Mistress" (A29) refers to a woman who has extramarital relations in exchange for regular companionship and support.

137) ZOFIA. "Chardonnay" (A29) is a dry white wine popular with young women.

138) MAREK. "Armageddon" (A29) refers to a prophesized battle at the end of the world.

139) MAREK. "Matchmaker" (A29) indicates a person who brings people together romantically.

140) MAREK. "Husband" (A29) refers to a man who is married.

141) EWA. "Expiration date" (A29) refers to the date when produce is no longer suitable for consumption.

142) EWA. "Siren" (A29) refers to mythical seductresses who lured men to their destruction.

143) EWA. "Orphan" (A30) refers to a person without parents or a known lineage.

144) EWA. "Widow" (A30) indicates a woman whose husband is dead.

145) MAREK. "Covenant" (A30) refers to an ecclesiastical agreement or contract.

146) MAREK. "Compass" (A30) refers to a point of reference, an instrument that determines direction.

147) MAREK. "North and South" (A30) refers to two major points on the compass.

148) MAREK. "Haunt" (A30) refers to a thought persisting in the mind.

149) EWA. "God-forsaken village" (A30) refers to a blighted village.

150) EWA. "Stoop" (A30) refers to stairs or a porch where people sit.

151) EWA. "Useless friends" (A30) refers to social companions who are a detrimental influence.

152) EWA. "Stray cats" (A30) refers to feral cats who roam without masters.

153) MAREK. "Box of chocolates" (A30) refers to the common gift of a fancy box full of an assortment of chocolate candies.

154) MAREK. "Customs" (A30) refers to the process at an airport during which personal belongings are inspected.

155) MAREK. "Banks" "Robbers" (A30) refers to financial institutions and the criminals who steal from them.

156) EWA. "Chasm" (A30) refers to a drastic rupture in a relationship.

157) EWA. "Two little rats, taking scraps" (A31) refers to manner in which rats survive, dependant on the refuse of others.

158) MAREK. "A little cake, a little coffee" (A31) refers to people politely sitting together eating traditional refreshments.

159) WACEK. "Passed out" (A31) refers to blacking out from excessively drinking alcohol.

160) WACEK. "Mourned" (A31) refers to the act of grieving for the dead.

161) WACEK. "Drunk" (A31) refers to the state of suffering from drinking too much alcohol.

162) WACEK. "Pneumonia" (A31) is an illness involving inflammation of the lungs.

163) WACEK. "Corpse" (A31) refers to a dead body.

164) WACEK. "Protector" (A31) refers to someone who looks after someone else.

165) WACEK. "Muse" (A31) refers to a person who inspires another person.

166) WACEK. "Anesthesia" (A31) is something that dulls sensations and feelings.

167) WACEK. "Angels" (A31) refer to the Christian concept of guardian or guiding spirits.

168) WACEK. "Fool" (A31) refers to a person who is easily duped.

169) WACEK. "Victim" (A31) refers to a person who is injured and suffers as a result.

170) WACEK. "Slaves" (A31) refer to the state of being subservient to a person, institution, or idea.

171) WACEK. "Master" (A31) refers to a person who has the capacity to command a situation.

B. Choice of Phrase and Sentence Structure

1. Monologues

Diaspora is anchored by two monologues at the beginning and end of the show; the first is by Marek and the second is by Wacek. What both monologues have in common is that they state the will of the character and the beginning of attaining a new goal. Both monologues take place in the slushy January street in front of Ewa's building and both involve taxis. Marek states:

> Whatever is shattered, I will put together again. I don't care what doctors say. Doctor's only cut you and poison you… She will come home and live with me again and it will be as if we're young and beautiful and whole. She will bring me breakfast and I will bring her wild flowers from the woods. There are no wild flowers here, only flowers wrapped in plastic and sealed in a box like a tomb. I will take Ewa back to where wild flowers grow and I will mend her. (Wlodarczyk A3)

Wacek also has an ambition for his voyage to New York. When Wacek is speaking about his father, Wacek states:

> He lived in dreams and his dreams ruined him. I will be different. I will never be anyone's fool. I shape life by the force of my will. I will not be a victim to weak philosophy that can only create slaves. I will be the master of my life. I will be aware of every second of my brief existence—that was our bus. That was our bus… Fine, we'll take a taxi. (Wlodarczyk A31)

2. Interruptions

The characters in *Diaspora* have a pattern of interrupting each other and speaking over each other. Kasper and Ewa have a quick repartee between them that is punctuated with barbed comments and flirtations (Wlodarczyk A3-A7). This can be seen in the dialogue in the form of punctuation; dashes show when one character interrupts another. In a battle for control, Ewa and Marek start interrupting each other almost immediately. One example is when Ewa starts objecting to a veiled accusation and Marek barges in, "He didn't give you anything. He came to tell you that you don't have mail. What's on your coffee table? Looks like mail" (Wlodarczyk A9). Wacek and Marek tensely interrupt each other over and over again during their chess game; one pushes the other and the other pushes back in a contest for dominance. Wacek ends the argument with the riposte, "Old men have time for games" (Wlodarczyk A17). As the tension builds in the crowded household, the conversation grows more intense and the interruptions become more acrimonious. The most useful interruption comes from Marek, who usually stays out of the family arguments and observes until the tension cools. Wacek is apathetically trying to silence Zofia's calumny of Ewa. Marek then defends Zofia. Marek simply and firmly states, "Let her speak her mind" (Wlodarczyk A23). When Marek and Ewa have a private conversation towards the ends of the play, Ewa does most of the interrupting and Marek does most of the listening. "Time is— "Marek says, as he begins one of his philosophical statements. Ewa speaks right over him, with her own pent-up philosophical depression; she states, "What a wasted life…a few years to earnestly flail around and drown. To be done and fall on mercy may be a relief" (Wlodarczyk A24). Later, Marek sadly states, "I don't need to know. I'll forgive you if you don't tell me. We've been apart

and I understand that you—", but Ewa cruelly interrupts Marek with reminders of her unfaithfulness (Wlodarczyk A29-A30). The pattern of recurrent interruptions only stops when Marek and Ewa reach a nebulous détente. After Ewa agrees to let Marek stay the night as a house guest, Ewa changes the pace of the conversation. She says, "Fine. Do you still take your coffee with sugar?" and the conversations slows to diplomatic tempo (Wlodarczyk A31).

3. Religious and Philosophical Language

Religion influences the speech of all of the characters in *Diaspora*. Kasper uses religious language to toy with Ewa as she challenges him. Kasper derides Ewa by saying, "Is it because you're sick? If you want to die pure and repentant, you have a lot of catching up to do" (Wlodarczyk A6). After Ewa's initial annoyance over meeting Zofia, Ewa immediately condemns Zofia. "No church wedding? Did the priest disapprove of the union?" Ewa questions (Wlodarczyk A11).

Wacek can not escape religious language, even though he renounces religion; this means that religious terms are part of the shared language of Ewa's family. "Look, think of me as a humanist or realist. I always have been. What difference does a sacrament make if you don't believe in it?" (Wlodarczyk A12). Wacek asks. He even uses religious language when he explains his ideas on religion or philosophy:

> Religion and Vodka both numb you. I want to be fully aware of all of my senses. A conversation overheard, heat and cold on my skin, the first moment when I wake up in the morning. That is the composition of my soul. (Wlodarczyk A20)

Marek frequently uses Catholic reasons to hang on to Ewa. On the subject of divorce, he declares, "I won't sign. I won't break a true marriage" (Wlodarczyk A29). Ewa also uses Catholic reasons to divorce; she states, "The church would not even fault you. That was not the mailman. Would you like the truth? I'll tell you everything about every one of them. There have been many men. I even forgot some of their names" (Wlodarczyk A29). Zofia mocks Wacek's philosophy when Wacek antisocially refuses a drink. Zofia flippantly responds, "No wonder he's an atheist" (Wlodarczyk A20).

4. Repressed Resentment and Outbursts

Impassioned outbursts are a pattern for Ewa and her family members, who have innumerable resentment built up after fifteen years of separation. The pattern is staccato conversation, usually dominated by Ewa, followed by an outburst. After a tense conversation that apprises her of some of her family's activities and her son's cynical rejection, Ewa reprimands Wacek. She states, "I took care of you from here. The new shoes every season, the tutoring lessons, I slaved away so you learn to believe in nothing. The sacrifice I made—" (Wlodarczyk A12). Wacek blames Ewa:

> You aren't exactly canonized. When you left, it took me years to live down your reputation—the speculation and gossip. They said you left because of the butcher. Someone else said you left to get an abortion. Somebody else said Dad kicked you out. I tried to defend you, but the names… I was a kid, what was I supposed to do? Should I have been philosophical about other boys calling my mother the whore of the village? Do you think new shoes from America make up for that? (Wlodarczyk A13)

Continuing the pattern of angry outbursts after tense discussion, Ewa will not bow down to passive-aggressive criticism from a family who was happy to take her money for the past decade and a half. Although she speaks to Zofia, she indicts Marek. Ewa complains:

> Zofia, Dear, I'm sorry. I'm a little shocked. I asked my husband to visit—to stay—years ago. I asked and I asked. I waited and I waited. Now, Mr. Eleventh Hour thinks he'll be the knight in dented armor and save the dying damsel. I don't want to be saved by someone who could not be bothered to move his ass for fifteen years. So Zofia, have a nice visit in New York. (Wlodarczyk A13)

Marek, although more phlegmatic than the other characters, also expresses his bottled-up frustration when Zofia and Wacek vilify Ewa. Marek promulgates:

> You weren't there, when we were young, how magnificent she was. You don't know why jealous people say… People say a lot of things and you don't always know why they say them. Some people have nothing better to do than judge. She had a hard life. You kids don't know what it is to have a hard, hungry life. You don't know, so don't assume what you don't know. (Wlodarczyk A19)

Although Zofia is polite in the beginning of *Diaspora*, she also shares the pattern of tempestuous outbursts in self-defense and in defense of Wacek. Zofia channels Wacek's frustration when she assails Ewa:

> I won't let a woman who scrubs toilets for a living tell me what is possible. You can't even read a phonebook in English, let alone Polish. Wacek and I have options and you just want to keep us down with you, so your fallow

> life doesn't seem so wasted. Insult me if you want, but I see through you. (Wlodarczyk A23)

Zofia continues her case against Ewa, while Wacek stands by passively watching. Zofia states:

> From what I've heard about your mother, she's always been in some kind of unfortunate condition. I'm sorry you're ill. I am, but only you could turn it into a weapon. She's using your pity against you… She's been doing it for years. She disappoints and betrays you. You think you're almost done with her. Then you remember how hard life was for her and she wins again. Life is hard for everyone. (Wlodarczyk A23)

Marek appeals to Ewa in a speech— almost a poem— he has probably been ruminating over for years. After all of Ewa's rejection, Marek begs Ewa:

> You are flesh and soul in my hands. If you and I— if we are not true, then I am a lie. You are my covenant. You are my compass, my north and south. Where can I go, where you will not haunt me? If you abandon me now, I will die before you, even if they bury you first. If only you'd waited— (Wlodarczyk A30)

The leitmotif of animated outbursts after anxious dialogue is logical in the situation of Ewa, Marek, Wacek, and Zofia. They are in a pressure cooker of a situation: years of unresolved pain and disappointment cramped in a small apartment.

C. Choice of Images

In "real" life, people say what they say for specific reasons and motivations; the same is true for characters in a play. Words are not wasted on stage: they are the bricks

that build a character. The images in the dialogue serve a purpose besides interesting exposition of the action. Hodge states:

> The produced play actually hovers in the air between the actors on the stage and the audience in the house; it is a froth of images waiting to be rescued and assimilated by the audience… Everything a viewer sees and hears is converted automatically into his own images. (Hodge 70)

1.

> MAREK. I have my troubles, but my Ewa has it worse. Frankly, she is an unlucky woman, a magnet for black cats and the evil eye. She works hard, but nothing she wants is ever in the cards for her. I try to tell her, you can't have everything you want. You're lucky if you can avoid what you don't want, but she pushes and pushes… (Wlodarczyk A3)
>
> * * *
>
> MAREK. Let's settle my fate inside. (Wlodarczyk A9)
>
> * * *
>
> WACEK. He always said there are no accidents that God knows everything and angels watch us. He told me he was destined to be my mother's protector and she was destined to be his muse, but he could never lucidly see life—like I can. (Wlodarczyk A31)

The audience should see and hear Marek muttering "old wives tales" and superstitious clichés. Marek is susceptible to fearful superstition as shown by the repetition of superstitious clichés. The use of images such as "black cats", "evil eye",

and "in the cards" is a cogent example that Marek thinks there are many mysterious forces beyond his control that may have unexpected consequence.

2.

> EWA. Listen princess, you need to be realistic. If you want to stay, you need to contribute and take what is available. It is only temporary.
>
> ZOFIA. Is that what you said to yourself fifteen years ago? I won't let a woman who scrubs toilets for a living tell me what is possible. You can't even read a phonebook in English, let alone Polish. Wacek and I have options and you just want to keep us down with you, so your fallow life doesn't seem so wasted. Insult me if you want, but I see through you. (Wlodarczyk A22-A23)
>
> * * *
>
> EWA. I though cleaning other people's houses was temporary once. At first I thought, I can stand it for a month. Then, I thought, a year is nothing. A year is everything… When I was young, I used to think that I could reinvent myself. I thought, 'I may be nothing, inside I am…' I thought I could make things new by the force of my will, but I've just been myself all my life. (Wlodarczyk A24)

The audience should imagine Ewa as a young and determined woman who felt that the course of her life was entirely her decision. Ewa uses "will", the same word that Wacek uses in his final monologue (Wlodarczyk A31). When Ewa was young, she felt as powerful as Wacek does now. She once felt that she could shape life exactly as she wished it. The audience should go on to imagine the first year Ewa spent as a maid and

how she felt it was only temporary. When she was as young as Wacek and Zofia, she also confidently felt like time was elastic. The audience should then envision Ewa as time passes, five or ten years later, when she no longer has the choice to leave the profession of housekeeping. Weariness and acceptance take the place of former dreams. Privileged Zofia's concise criticism of Ewa emphasizes the extensive years of Ewa's disappointment.

3.

> MAREK. I try to forget her, but she is woven into the fiber of my skin…she is the marrow in my bones and the sinew in my muscles. Whatever is shattered, I will put together again… I know the doctors are wrong about Ewa. She will live, live to be a wise old woman—with me. We will sit on the porch together and watch the centuries pass, forever and ever. She will come home and live with me again and it will be as if we're young and beautiful and whole. She will bring me breakfast and I will bring her wild flowers from the woods. There are no wild flowers here, only flowers wrapped in plastic and sealed in a box like a tomb. I will take Ewa back to where wild flowers grow and I will mend her. (Wlodarczyk A3)
>
> * * *
>
> MAREK. You weren't there, when we were young, how magnificent she was. You don't know why jealous people say… (Wlodarczyk A19)
>
> * * *

> MAREK. When you are your age, you think you have the time to tear apart and rebuild. Destruction seems so damn seductive. Lives can be so tangled together, they can't be severed. (Wlodarczyk A16)

The sentimental narrations about Ewa and Marek are entirely from Marek. It is Marek who has the burden of proof to prove to Ewa that the relationship they have is worth saving. Marek's version of the story may be considerably more idealistic than Ewa's more laconic perspective. The audience should envision Ewa and Marek when they were happy and in love; this subjective memory is what binds Marek to Ewa. For Marek, permanent separation from Ewa would be almost like having a physical part of him "severed".

The audience should also imagine Marek back home in the village daydreaming about Ewa, praying about Ewa, and being depressed about Ewa. The audience should also see Marek paralyzed by the fear of what an actual reunion would be like. Marek's delusions about Ewa and his perception of his role in Ewa's life are more comfortable than facing possible rejection.

4.

> KASPER. When are you going to leave your husband?
>
> EWA. When are you going to leave your wife? Never mind, you're not marriage material. (Wlodarczyk A4)
>
> * * *
>
> KASPER. As soon as some deals I'm working on come through for me, I *will* pay you back. You inspire me.
>
> EWA. I enable you.

KASPER. Stop watching Dr. Phil. Psychology is terribly for your peace of mind. (Wlodarczyk A4-A5)

* * *

KASPER. Pop psychology ruins all of my relationships. Everyone wants a soul mate. I'm good for you and you're good for me.

EWA. Maybe.

KASPER. Everyone needs a vice. (Wlodarczyk A7)

Since Ewa has spent a decade in the United States, the audience should visualize her everyday life acclimating to American culture. During this time, Ewa has worked and lived, absorbing ideas about marriage, sex, and all relationships in between. Ewa also shows her linguistic conversion to American pop culture including pop psychology. Ewa's conversation with Kasper, which includes the use of popular psychological terms, demonstrates how they are both influenced by American pop culture.

5.

EWA. That parasite lawyer finally fixed my immigration papers. (Wlodarczyk A5)

* * *

EWA. I can't help you. I'm not even legal. If I had a green card, I could sponsor you. We'll be two little rats, taking scraps, and hoping we never get caught. For your own sake, go home. (Wlodarczyk A31)

The audience should conceptualize Ewa going through the legal process of immigration with the help of her attorney. Ewa's acerbic description of her attorney conjures up all of the common images in American culture that are associated with

lawyers: suits, offices, and expensive bills charged by the hour. When Ewa chooses to use an American cliché for attorney, "lawyer", she gives evidence of how her language patterns have adapted to her adopted homeland.

The image of rats, creatures who survive on "scraps", should help the audience to envision the challenges of being an immigrant trying to get by on what opportunities one can manage to find in unfamiliar and sometimes hostile territory. This is a partial lie is meant to salve her rejection of Marek. Ewa managed with hardships, so there is no reason to assume that Marek could not do the same in his own long-suffering fashion.

6.

> KASPER. Is it because you're sick? If you want to die pure and repentant, you have a lot of catching up to do. (Wlodarczyk A6)
>
> * * *
>
> MAREK. I won't sign. I won't break a true marriage.
>
> EWA. The church would not even fault you. That was not the mailman. Would you like the truth?
>
> MAREK. I don't need to know. I'll forgive you if you don't tell me. (Wlodarczyk A29)

The audience should imagine Ewa doing the opposite of "pure and repentant". Ewa lives like an actively single woman, taking lovers as she pleases, even though she is still married to the absent Marek. Kasper uses traditional religious concepts to remind Ewa of her professed faith and admonish her about how she chooses which rules are useful for her.

7.

EWA. It isn't because I'm…terminal. You and I are not—

KASPER. —terminal.

EWA. Right.

KASPER. If we're breaking up, by definition, that makes us terminal. (Wlodarczyk A6)

* * *

MAREK. I don't need to know. I'll forgive you if you don't tell me. We've been apart and I understand that you—

EWA. I'll tell you everything about every one of them. There have been many men. I even forgot some of their names. When I arrived in New York years ago, men would miss their subway stop to be near me a little longer. I was like the Siren, drawing them to me. I felt some kind of raw power… After a while, regret hardly stings. Sometimes, I forgot about you and home. I became an orphan and widow, gloriously alone, but never for long. (Wlodarczyk A29-A30)

The audience should imagine other times Ewa has deserted lovers that no longer excite her. From the evidence of her vicious invective against Marek, the pattern of having affairs is a game she always wins. Judging by her words, Ewa equates her sexuality with power and chooses relationships in which she can dominate.

The image of the mythical seductresses who impelled men to feel lethal adoration should aid the audience in understanding how Ewa views her womanhood.

By using the image of the Siren, supercilious Ewa demonstrates that she sees her sensuality as an adaptable weapon.

8.

> EWA. (EWA puts down a kettle of tea. The phone rings.) Hello Father Fiatkowski How are you?... I'm sorry to hear that… Actually, I was going to be there this evening, but you know that. Someone from the alter guild goes every Friday night… There must be a misunderstanding. I dress the way any good looking woman in this city dresses. Lots of other women in church wear the exact same dress… Maybe it does look different on me. I'm not trying to distract anyone…Maybe some people are easily distracted…I was not forcing myself on the new priest. No… (The kettle screams. She forgets to turn off the stove.) Yes, I did I say that…Maybe it just sounded like that…I didn't mean that…If he thinks that was a sexual overture, as you call it, he's socially inept…You can't fire me, I'm a volunteer. (Wlodarczyk A8)

The audience should conceptualize Ewa eagerly contributing her time at church, which is central to her identity. Ewa also sees her time working at the church as a noteworthy contribution to parish life and is vexed when the priests do not appreciate her.

The audience should also see Ewa coquettishly dressed up at church. She, as she claims, dresses like other women, but her countenance and behavior flusters the younger of the priests. The audience should imagine an awkward situation with the young priest during which her intentions are misunderstood.

9.

> MAREK. You kids go ahead. I'll pay for the taxi. Fifty dollars. I didn't ask for a tour of New York. You could have told me you charged for directions before I…Take it, take it, take it…I'm never taking a taxi again. When I have Ewa back to Poland, we'll walk the entire way… You have to be a king to live comfortably in this city. I don't know what I expected…I expected more. I expected this city to look more like on television. This is nothing like MTV…trash on the sidewalk just like Poland, the people look just as miserable as they do back home. They only person who approached me with a smile, was the man who took my wallet. He said, "Hey buddy, give me your wallet." I gave him my wallet, no problem. Just like home, everybody's out to screw you. He doesn't know I keep my money and documents in my underwear. (Wlodarczyk A3)
>
> * * *
>
> MAREK. Have you forgotten your manners, living in Babylon so long? May I at least step in and warm up? The weather is vicious. (Wlodarczyk A8)

The audience should see Marek arriving in New York, disconcerted and suspicious of the large city that has been the distant home of Ewa for so long. Marek's monologue describes his initiation to New York; how he was affronted by the taxi driver and overwhelmed by the expense of the city. Visually, New York is less than what he expected, based on his brief exposure to Ewa's environment. The audience should also picture Marek's mental version of New York, a place in which all temptations are

available to all. The archaic religious reference shows the influence religion has on his thinking.

10.

> MAREK. I used to hate her for leaving me, but I am an empty soul without her. I try to forget her, but she is woven into the fiber of my skin…she is the marrow in my bones and the sinew in my muscles. Whatever is shattered, I will put together again. I don't care what doctors say. Doctor's only cut you and poison you. The last doctor I saw pulled the wrong tooth. The rotten tooth is still there and it aches like hell. I know the doctors are wrong about Ewa. She will live, live to be a wise old woman—with me. We will sit on the porch together and watch the centuries pass, forever and ever. She will come home and live with me again and it will be as if we're young and beautiful and whole. (Wlodarczyk A3)
>
> * * *
>
> MAREK. Let's settle my fate inside. (Wlodarczyk A9)

The audience should imagine Marek's subjective ideal of living happily with Ewa in fairy-tale fashion, like the dream of an adolescent boy. He has a selective memory when it comes to Ewa; he remembers when they were both "young and beautiful and whole". At this point in *Diaspora*, he is confident that his desires will triumph over any impediment, even Ewa's unyielding will.

11.

MAREK. I expected this city to look more like on television. This is nothing like MTV…trash on the sidewalk just like Poland, the people look just as miserable as they do back home. They only person who approached me with a smile, was the man who took my wallet. He said, "Hey buddy, give me your wallet." I gave him my wallet, no problem. Just like home, everybody's out to screw you. He doesn't know I keep my money and documents in my underwear. The only thing in my wallet is a Soviet condom from 1989, which tells you how interesting my life has been since Ewa left me to make a living *here*… (Wlodarczyk A3)

* * *

MAREK. This is perfect. I have been dreaming about your apartment for years. I thought would be like a television show. (Wlodarczyk A11)

* * *

MAREK. Checkmate.

WACEK. Old men have time for games.

MAREK. What pressing engagement do you have?

(WACEK turns to the television and changes the channel.)

WACEK. Zofia, get in here. (Wlodarczyk A17)

The audience should feel like television is almost a character in Diaspora. Television establishes the expatriate family's presumptions about New York and American life, as well as being a physical part of the conversation. For example, Marek and Wacek talk while watching television rather than communicating directly with each

other. Wacek and Marek use it to deflect emotion in an uncomfortable situation Television is also an excuse to end a conversation. The audience should see the television as a dominate model for behavior and ideals.

12.

> WACEK. You aren't exactly canonized. When you left, it took me years to live down your reputation—the speculation and gossip. They said you left because of the butcher. Someone else said you left to get an abortion. Somebody else said Dad kicked you out. I tried to defend you, but the names— (Wlodarczyk A13)
>
> * * *
>
> MAREK. You weren't there, when we were young, how magnificent she was. You don't know why jealous people say… (Wlodarczyk A19)

The lines above express the abiding images in the minds of Marek and Wacek regarding rumors about Ewa's behavior and the accompanying shame from Wacek's perspective. Wacek's forceful accusations display the suspicions he has of his mother and the slander others have said about her over the years. Marek tries to remind Wacek that rumors are not always true.

13.

> MAREK. When I was a kid, I had a cat. She scratched my arm, pissed in the house, and meowed like a she-devil. I loved that cat.
>
> WACEK. So what?

MAREK. Rumor has it; she killed the neighbor's cat. One night, I heard her screech in the backyard and I never saw her again. You've clearly lost the game. (Wlodarczyk A16)

Through Marek's bucolic imagery, the audience should see Ewa's innate feline qualities: beauty, independence, and self-interested detachment. Despite the cat's aloofness and opportunism, its calculated charm entraps.

14.

EWA. Zofia, are you growing coffee beans?

ZOFIA. The cups don't match. I was looking for four of the same set. (Wlodarczyk A12)

* * *

ZOFIA. Remember what we left? We have a nice place—

WACEK. —with your parents. We were going to make our own start—

ZOFIA. Living in my home is a bit different than this rat hole of a flat. (Wlodarczyk A21)

The audience should imagine Ewa's everyday housekeeping habits: tidying up, cleaning, and washing the dishes that are below Zofia's standards. The eclectic collection of cups is an extension of Ewa's life: frugal scraps patched together to make a whole of contrasting patterns. Wacek and Marek are not perplexed. Zofia, however, is disappointed because her economic expectations about hospitality include quality china, not mismatched dinnerware. Zofia might be able to endure Ewa's living conditions, but Ewa is hostile towards Zofia. From Zofia's protests to Wacek, the audience should imagine Zofia's pleasant and prosperous lifestyle and home in Poland.

15.

> MAREK. Take what you like. Ewa's kitchen has always been generous… A woman's kitchen tells you more about her than her lingerie. What secrets are in the cupboard? What does she reveal and what does she hide? (Wlodarczyk A14)

The audience should see Ewa through the eyes of Marek. When Marek thinks of Ewa, he thinks of her in the kitchen, which is a feminine and nurturing sanctuary to him. The personal space of Ewa's kitchen reveals her economic status and her individual proclivities. Even when she is away from the apartment, she cares for Wacek, Zofia, and Marek by providing their favorite foods— just as she financially cared for Wacek and Marek when they were oceans away.

When Marek talks of Ewa's lingerie, he is also thinking of Ewa as his woman. The audience should see the image of lingerie as an expression of Ewa's sensuality. Marek values Ewa's pleasurable manner of presenting herself as much as he does her cooking.

16.

> WACEK. Mother, I am not a puppet. What has your religion done for you?
>
> EWA. What does that mean?
>
> WACEK. You know.
>
> EWA. No, I don't.
>
> WACEK. You aren't exactly canonized. When you left, it took me years to live down your reputation—the speculation and gossip. They said you left because of the butcher. Someone else said you left to get an abortion.

> Somebody else said Dad kicked you out. I tried to defend you, but the names— (Wlodarczyk A13)
>
> * * *
>
> WACEK. What a farce you people are, marionettes acting out a childish wish. That's why I don't believe in marriage.
>
> MAREK. You seem domestically comfortable.
>
> WACEK. I believe in my own marriage. I believe in Zofia and me, but *most* people are simply colliding molecules that stuck together— (Wlodarczyk A16)

The audience should see Ewa and Marek through the judgmental eyes of Wacek. The marionette imagery depicts Ewa and Marek as followers making blind choices based on the repressive institutions and governing doxies that have ruled their lives, rather than acting as autonomous, rational adults. Wacek thinks this is especially true in terms of Ewa and Marek staying married when their relationship is so badly damaged. The vacant puppet imagery further indicates that Wacek harshly deems his parents as dumb minions of beliefs they do not comprehend. The audience should visualize Ewa and Wacek going through the motions of their everyday lives without thinking about their choices.

The audience should also see Wacek in his own world at the University, developing into the skeptical person he has become. The audience should also imagine Wacek's time spent in the Catholic Church and how he combined his developing beliefs.

17.

> MAREK. She won't listen to you like that once she's here a while. American women don't. Oprah tells them not to— (Wlodarczyk A15)

The audience should imagine the American media through the fearful perspective of Marek. Of all the media deities, Marek considers Oprah the most omnipotent when it comes to what Marek sees as brainwashing American women. Ideally, the audience should recognize Oprah as the popular media's most potent symbol of American feminism and, from Marek's perspective, a threat to domestic order of both Wacek's and Marek's marriages.

18.

> MAREK. Did you know we had livestock? After a while, we had to sell them or eat them, but for a while we had sheep…There were the stupidest animals. Not like horses. You have to earn the respect of a horse. You have to make a horse want to follow your lead, but a sheep will go anywhere they are lead. Checkmate. (Wlodarczyk A17)

Marek uses more rustic imagery by comparing Wacek to an indolent sheep. Marek seems to have respect for the intelligence of horses, but insults Wacek by saying he is not up the level of a horse and that he has much to learn by comparing him to sheep. The audience should see that, under Marek's sly influence, Wacek is relatively easy to manipulate and distract.

19.

> MAREK. Better now than never. May I come in? I think I do have a right. Remember, some years ago there was a wedding, we lived in a house and so on. For me to enter, you need to remove yourself the doorway.
>
> EWA. Of course, I don't know whether to beat you or invite you in for coffee—I'm more inclined to the former. (Wlodarczyk A9)
>
> * * *
>
> WACEK. Maybe you were looking for this. (WACEK pulls a wedding ring out of the couch.)It's a man's ring. I saw a man in the hallway when we arrived. (Wlodarczyk A19)

In this case, the audience should see the image of a ring as a symbol of both marriage and infidelity. The inconveniently found wedding ring obviously belongs to someone besides Marek. Wacek brutally coerces Marek into conceding that Ewa has other lovers. This is a defeat for Marek in the verbal sparing between father and son. Marek, however firmly believes he is within his rights to claim Ewa, based on their past domestic history.

20.

> MAREK. Why shouldn't you have nice things? No point in new clothes when the body is too old to honor them. New wine in old skins…
>
> (MAREK tears at his tie, throwing it over a chair.) (Wlodarczyk A19)

The audience should imagine Marek as an enervated elderly clown in his fashionable clothes, especially when he juxtaposes his aged visage and tired body with the young beauty and strength of Zofia and Wacek.

The audience should further imagine the way Marek's religion influences his thinking. Marek's use of a biblical reference "new wine in old skins" shows the audience that his religion, including the literature and traditions, are part of his thinking process and comforts him. This is a loose reference to the parable in Luke 5:36-39:

> He told them this parable: "No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, 'The old is better.'"

The essence is that the new and old are incompatible; the past and the future rarely make peace. Marek had envisaged beginning over with Ewa, but he sees that the past is unyielding and shows no mercy even to the regretful.

21.

> MAREK. All a man needs in life is a well-cut suit and a well-built woman. (Wlodarczyk A20)

Marek's pronouncement should give the audience the image of Marek's ideals of masculine achievement: the costly suit that makes a man look successful and the good-looking trophy woman beside him. Back to his inspired self, he once again offers his sapient and unsought advice.

22.

> WACEK. Religion and Vodka both numb you. I want to be fully aware of all of my senses. A conversation overheard, heat and cold on my skin, the first moment when I wake up in the morning. That is the composition of my soul. (Wlodarczyk A20)

The audience should imagine the world through Wacek's skeptical eyes; he only trusts what he can directly experience. He uses tangible images of the physical body: temperature, skin, and every physical sense. Although he uses the word "soul", his descriptions are all corporeal.

The audience should also consider death from the perspective of Wacek. Wacek is insistent about his belief that he will make the most of the only material life he has and has no expectation of an afterlife.

23.

> EWA. If you're going to stay, you both need to contribute and take care of yourselves. Would you agree?
>
> ZOFIA. Remember, I'm the industrious one. (Wlodarczyk A21)
>
> * * *
>
> ZOFIA. Surely he's qualified for something better. He has a master's degree in philosophy.
>
> EWA. How stupid of me. I should have asked Socrates if he had any job openings. (Wlodarczyk A22)
>
> * * *

> ZOFIA. I won't go with you. You've been trying to shame me since I arrived, and I won't abide that. I'm not a rugged village girl grateful for the chance to polish shoes.
>
> WACEK. Gritty work is good enough for Wacek, but not for you?
>
> ZOFIA. The work is not good enough for him. He deserves more than your crumbs.
>
> EWA. You should be grateful to have a husband willing to support his household. (Wlodarczyk A22)

The audience should see Zofia and Wacek engaging in their university studies, which Ewa does not regard as worthy or practical for the coarse world Ewa knows. Ewa references Socrates as a means to mock what she considers Wacek's impractically ancient skill set: a master's degree in philosophy. Ewa also quickly concludes that Zofia and Wacek are gullible and excessively idealistic and must be prepped for a merciless world. Ewa is positively convinced that only she is the only one in the family competent and worldly enough to prepare them for likely future rejection; she certainly does not accredit impractical Marek with the common sense to mentor Zofia and Marek.

The imagery of polishing shoes should give the audience the vision of Ewa's lifetime spent in low-level, low-paying jobs. Zofia indicts Ewa for having servile lineage and only primitive manual skills as exemplified by the humble task of polishing shoes. In addition, reminding Ewa that she is from an insignificant village, as opposed to Zofia's Warsaw, means that Zofia is using the images of their respective hometowns as a concrete testament to Zofia's own sense of superiority.

24.

EWA. If you want an engineering job, go to India. Here, people clean, sell things, or fix things that are made elsewhere. (Wlodarczyk A22)

The image of India, representing job opportunities moving to developing markets, should make the audience visualize Zofia and Wacek's place in the diverse global economy. Even though they are educated, secure employment is not guaranteed. Ewa construes her opinion of economic opportunities for Zofia and Wacek in order to warn them of future challenges; she thinks she is rescuing them from potential disillusionment. Ewa continues her unsought auspice, which Zofia perceives as a violation.

25.

EWA. Maybe she needs a few calluses. (Wlodarczyk A23)

* * *

EWA. Then why don't you take the job?

ZOFIA. I will. I can't wait to work with you.

EWA. Don't feel obligated for my sake.

ZOFIA. I need a few calluses. (Wlodarczyk A23)

The audience should see Ewa in her daily cleaning chores and the resulting calluses on her hands. Inversely, the audience should also imagine Zofia's soft world with material contentment and her soft hands, because manual labor has not been a part of her life. The image of "calluses" shows the audience Ewa's desire to make Zofia experience misery, rejection, and hard work to make Zofia resilient. Ewa wants Zofia to know that no one in New York will care about her advantaged pedigree. Ewa thinks Zofia will be appraised as merely one of many replaceable immigrants.

26.

MAREK. I never took you for a puritan. Why am I looking at an ashtray with cigarette butts?

EWA. That's for company.

MAREK. What am I?

EWA. You're not company. I haven't smoked for six months.

MAREK. Of all the habits you chose to give up…

EWA. You can smoke, but you have to share.

MAREK. You want this?

EWA. Give it. Come on. Don't tell my lungs I'm cheating on them.

MAREK. I think they've known for years. (Wlodarczyk A24)

The audience should imagine Ewa's struggle to decide whether to smoke or not in the abstemious anti-smoking American culture; the environment of excessive anti-smoking regulations has even altered recalcitrant Ewa, an inveterate smoker. This is a shock to Marek, since smoking is a deleterious indulgence Ewa and Marek have always shared in their native Poland, where smoking is conventional. Marek chooses to judge Ewa for her embracement of rigid ideas about what people should consume. Ewa has become accustomed to health warnings on practically any consumer product in the litigious United States. The incriminating evidence of the cigarette butts shows that she has rescinded her rules for another visitor.

27.

> MAREK. There's nothing like the peace of the unborn or the deep silence of the tomb. (Wlodarczyk A24)

The Biblical language of Marek's line should make the audience imagine of the comfort Ewa and Marek both take in their religion. The writing of this line was influenced by the poetic book of Ecclesiastes. Major themes included in this Old Testament book are futility in the temporal and comfort in the eternal. Marek compares the image of the struggle of life compared with the repose of death or the tranquility of never having been born.

28.

> EWA. He said they went to the courthouse.
>
> MAREK. Her parents insisted on a church wedding, even though both of them are non-practicing.
>
> EWA. Two non-practicing people. At least they have that in common. When did Wacek stop believing?
>
> MAREK. Officially, it was in University, but unofficially, he left the church years ago. (Wlodarczyk A25)

The audience should imagine Zofia and Wacek arguing and discussing the wedding with Zofia's parents. The fact that they had a church wedding, despite their apathy towards the Catholic Church, shows they are dependent on the approval of Zofia's parents. The image of the Catholic Church rite that Zofia and Wacek reject shows their obligation to decisions that are not their own.

29.

> WACEK. I'm going to get the luggage. So, you don't mind us staying at a hotel? (Wlodarczyk A26)

The audience should see Wacek as an insecure young man who wants to be imposing around his wife but becomes a little boy when he is around the tyrannical Ewa. Wacek's tentative choice to stay at a hotel produces a schism with Ewa. With Ewa's considerable supremacy in the family, Wacek's evanescent display of adult independence is quickly extinguished. The cardinal image is location, which is concisely controlled by Ewa.

30.

> WACEK. We'll stay where I say we stay. (WACEK pushes the suitcase. ZOFIA stands.)
>
> Now, let's go out to dinner. You'll feel better after a bottle of chardonnay.
>
> ZOFIA. —Half a bottle of chardonnay. Alright.
>
> WACEK. That's right. (Wlodarczyk A28)

The audience should be able to imagine the effort Wacek has expended to court Zofia. The image of chardonnay on a date night represents the newlywed romanticism Zofia expects, so Wacek uses it as a bargaining tool. It is an explicit peace offering to apologize for abdicating his responsibility of managing his mother like an adult son rather than a submissive boy.

The audience should also imagine past times when Zofia when Zofia was enjoying herself in the luxurious style to which she is accustomed. The evidence that

Zofia is placated with "chardonnay" and promises of other exciting evenings out in the city shows that this belle of the ball expects pleasure from life.

31.

> EWA. They will be in my room. You will sleep in the chair. I'll take the sofa. On the other hand, the chair has a broken spring that will poke your back. If you want, you can have the sofa. Either way, you'll get a back ache.
>
> MAREK. Where are you sleeping?
>
> EWA. Where ever you're not sleeping. (Wlodarczyk A28)

The audience should imagine Marek's pent-up desire for Ewa and his sense of ownership over her. This is the territorial question of a jilted husband anxious to regain his full sexual rights. The set pieces, the coach and the chair, become germane images to show who has mastery over their relationship and the physical space.

32.

> MAREK. She will outlast Armageddon. When the world has shattered into bits, she will be floating like a monolithic planet. (Wlodarczyk A29)

The audience should be able to envision a stout matron, so durable that she could endure "Armageddon". This is a cogent description of the woman who has dominated Ewa's family in Poland. One wonders if Ewa is an agent of her mother, vice versa, or if they collude to govern the family.

33.

> MAREK. I won't sign. I won't break a true marriage. (Wlodarczyk A29)
>
> * * *
>
> MAREK. You are flesh and soul in my hands. If you and I—if we are not true, then I am a lie. You are my covenant. You are my compass, my north and south. Where can I go, where you will not haunt me? If you abandon me now, I will die before you, even if they bury you first. If only you'd waited— (Wlodarczyk A30)

The audience should be able to imagine Ewa and Marek getting married, the early years of their marriage, and the joy they experienced when they had Wacek. The audience should further imagine difficult times, including bitter arguments, mutual disappointments, and internecine struggles. Whatever the circumstances, he does not want to burden his soul with the painful failure and the official sin of a divorce. The image of Ewa and Marek's Catholic marriage as an unbreakable union demonstrates Marek's sense of personal moral duty as well as institutional contracts that rule his life.

The audience should also envision Ewa and Marek in the everyday practice of their religion: attending masses, praying, and other activities. Since Wacek is mocking Ewa and Marek's marriage, the audience should also see them as a young married couple or perhaps as bride and groom.

34.

> MAREK. So let's stop. You, be quiet. See, that's nice. Now, stop wincing. I brought you something. (He gives her a box of chocolates.)

I was dying to eat these on the plane, but I knew they're your favorite sweets and you'd been missing them. Some of us can delay satisfaction.

(She brings out an identical box.)

EWA. I can buy anything here. (Wlodarczyk A30)

The audience should imagine Marek deliberately choosing the box of chocolates and protecting the choice gift as he traveled. The audience should then see Marek's abysmal disappointment when he sees that his box of chocolates appears to mean so little to Ewa. Ewa flaunting her own identical box of chocolates evinces the audience of Ewa's preference for ample American economic culture, in which consumer products are copious for consumers of even average means. Ewa is proud that she has become economically autonomous, thus rendering Marek unable to claim that he is head of household. The image of the identical boxes of chocolates shows that she is dexterous at navigating the global economy in which people and commodities are fluidly transient; Ewa, as a result, does not need Marek to be the financial provider he wishes to be.

35.

MAREK. All I'm asking is that you don't kick me out tonight. I stay here, on the couch or chair, your choice. You don't have to take me back; just don't kick me out, because I'm not leaving tonight. You have two hundred channels and I've only seen eleven of them. Let's be civil. Tonight, we're not mad. Tonight, you're not sick. We'll have a little cake, a little coffee.

EWA. Fine. Do you still take your coffee with sugar?

MAREK. Yes. Three lumps.

EWA. Too much. Now I drink my coffee black—people here like it strong and bitter.

MAREK. I like mine sweet and corrupted. (Wlodarczyk A31)

The audience should envision other times Ewa and Marek and sat peacefully at the kitchen table sharing food and conversation. Marek makes an attempt to make peace by reminding Ewa of the obligatory Polish custom of considerable time and effort spent on congenial treats such as cakes, coffee, and sandwiches. He convinces her not to make a decision until they have exchanged common courtesies, which allows the audience to see that Ewa is considering his offer.

The audience should regard Ewa's change in her taste in coffee as a concrete example of her adaptation to her adopted culture. The audience should imagine Ewa going out and dining in New York, finding new favorite food and drink in addition to her traditional favorites. When she tells Marek she now likes her coffee "bitter" and "strong", the audience should understand that she has endured a great ordeal and is resilient as a result. Ewa is divulging to Marek that she is not the same woman he knew.

The audience should perceive that Marek accepts Ewa as she is. Marek is saying that he prefers her, "sweet and corrupted"— just as he always has. In contrast to Ewa, his appetites have not changed. He loves Ewa as much as he did at the inception of their romance.

36.

> WACEK. Don't pout, we can't afford a taxi. The bus is fine. You should have worn more practical shoes (Wlodarczyk A31).

The audience should see the choice between taking a bus and a taxi as representative of the negotiations Wacek and Zofia will have to make in their new life together; both bring different desires that must be debated. Wacek explains that Zofia will have to make down-sizing adjustments to live in New York. Her elegant shoes show the audience that she retains expectations of enjoyment and luxury. The contrasting images of a taxi and a bus proffer opposing assumptions of their alien circumstances.

37.

> WACEK. He passed out—drunk—so many times. Sometimes I covered him with a blanket. Other times, I left him spread out like a corpse on the side walk. One time I left him and it rained and he got pneumonia. That was his own fault and a little bit my fault—but almost entirely his fault. (Wlodarczyk A31)
>
> * * *
>
> EWA. I would have died in that god-forsaken village…Watching you drink away our future every name day…Watching you sit on the stoop with your useless friends and the stray cats. (Wlodarczyk A30)

The image of corpse should help the audience envision the other side of Wacek's quixotic father, the one that sporadically passes out drunk. The image of Wacek as a "corpse" corroborates Ewa's opinion that Marek is a binge drinker often crippled by fear and inertia. The audience should poignantly visualize young Wacek finding his father in

the ignoble state of being passed out on a sidewalk. Wacek compares alcohol to the beliefs and passions Marek leans on to get through life. The audience should also envision young Ewa stranded in a dilapidated village that depresses her with a mother that dominates her.

38.

> EWA. I could call a friend with more space. She's a wealthy dentist who's kept her figure. I think she just broke up with her boyfriend.
>
> MAREK. Do we still use those adolescent terms at our age?
>
> EWA. Isn't it time you replaced me? I figured you took a mistress years ago. (Wlodarczyk A29)
>
> * * *
>
> MAREK. Why play matchmaker for your husband? (Wlodarczyk A29)

The audience should envision Ewa colluding with the wealthy lady dentist to see if the dentist would be interested in Marek, so Ewa will not be bothered by Marek. Ewa uses words associated with relationships that are not governed by the rules of marriage. Her intent is to make Marek see life after divorce. Marek uses the ironic term "matchmaker" to describe Ewa's attempt to push Marek, her "husband", off on another women of Ewa's choosing.

39.

> WACEK. If a woman did to me what my mother did to my father, I would…My mother is his vodka. Even though he knows he will suffer, he needs her to numb him and make him feel real. I guess we all need a bit of anesthesia to get us through life. (Wlodarczyk A31)

Wacek's description of Marek's dependence on the ideal of Ewa should help the audience see Marek's pertinacious desire to possess Ewa. She both helps and harms Marek, like alcohol. The image of anesthesia reinforces Wacek's view of his father's reliance. Wacek description of his father's frailty should help the audience see that Wacek thinks that Marek needs grace and consolation. From Wacek's perspective, even Marek deserves clemency.

40.

> MAREK. You kids need money?
>
> WACEK. We're fine.
>
> MAREK. You weren't fine when it was time to pay for the taxi.
>
> WACEK. What?
>
> MAREK. Are you going to take a taxi?
>
> WACEK. We'll take the bus. (Wlodarczyk A18)
>
> * * *
>
> WACEK. I will be the master of my life. I will be aware of every second of my brief existence—that was our bus. Zofia hurry up, we just missed the bus and we can't afford a taxi. (ZOFIA finally catches up to him, wincing. She embraces him completely.)
>
> Fine, we'll take a taxi. (Wlodarczyk A31).

Wacek missing his bus as he daydreams should help the audience see how similar Wacek is to his father in his imbalanced idealism. Wacek is as meandering in his own fantasies as Marek is in his illusions. The audience should see that Wacek is as human as

his parents. Despite Wacek's hyper-vigilance, he misses obvious practical details while pontificating.

The image of the Zofia's embrace should reveal to the audience that Zofia accepts the enigmatic future with Wacek. Despite her vexation, Zofia clings to Wacek to assure him that she is ready to engage the adversities to come.

41.

> MAREK. You can't blame Wacek for rejecting the past. The life we gave him was unstable. You remember how foolish we both were. When we were that age—
>
> EWA. When we were that age, we were working six days a week. We didn't have tie time for cruel fairy tales. (Wlodarczyk A26)

The audience should see the image of Ewa and Marek working long work weeks full of manual labour starting in their youth and perpetuating into their spiritless middle age. The audience should also envision the ease of Wacek and Zofia's current life and their innocent optimism acutely contrasted with Ewa and Marek's life.

42.

> MAREK. It is a good match. She's from Warsaw. Both of her parents are judges. Their dacha is better than most people's regular home. Her mother is elegant, like a queen from a story book. If you can predict what a woman's going to like by her mother, the future looks good. I mean she was—
>
> EWA. Did he marry her for the money? (Wlodarczyk A25)

The audience should imagine Zofia and her parents enjoying sunny days at their impressive "Dacha", a vacation home. Many people have modest little vacation houses, where they can garden and get a little sun, but what Zofia's family considers a second home is better than anything Marek and Ewa ever knew. Marek is also impressed with the attractive appearance of Zofia's mother and the manner in which the Zofia's entire family lives.

43.

MAREK. Company?

EWA. Mailman.

MAREK. You always whisper to the mailman?

EWA. No, I—

MAREK. He didn't give you anything. He came to tell you that you don't have mail. What's on your coffee table? Looks like mail. (Wlodarczyk A9)

* * *

MAREK. I won't sign. I won't break a true marriage.

EWA. The church would not even fault you. That was not the mailman. Would you like the truth?

(Wlodarczyk A29)

The audience should envision what Marek is imagining, a line of men competing for Ewa's attention. The obvious sarcasm from Ewa indicates that she wants Marek to know about her extramarital affairs now so he will emancipate her.

44.

EWA. Excuse me, Dear. I haven't heard a murmur about you. You're tall for my son, aren't you?

ZOFIA. He doesn't think so. I'll get the luggage.

EWA. Stay with me. Let the men do the heavy lifting. Let's get to know each other. (Wlodarczyk A10)

The audience should imagine lady-like Ewa having her luggage carried and doors opened for her by men. Ewa has the allure to manifest this behavior in others and expects it. The audience should see the angst Zofia feels about being belittled by Ewa immediately after meeting her.

45.

EWA. What do you mean you don't believe? Last time I saw you, you were going to mass with Grandma every day.

WACEK. I was ten. I didn't have a choice. Where grandma goes, we all must follow…

Look, think of me as a humanist or realist. I always have been. What difference does a sacrament make if you don't believe in it?

EWA. This wouldn't happen if I'd been around. You probably won't even baptize your children.

WACEK. If you want to baptize them, go ahead. I don't care.

EWA. You are expecting.

> WACEK. No, I meant hypothetically. When we have these hypothetical children you can immerse or sprinkle them or whatever voodoo you like. (Wlodarczyk A12)
>
> * * *
>
> MAREK. Don't hesitate. Whether you cross the street or not, whether you sleep in or wake up…What you don't know at your age, is whether you have coffee or tea can change your entire life.
>
> WACEK. What an epiphany. (Wlodarczyk A15)

The audience should imagine Wacek studying in college, which is why his vocabulary is different from his uneducated parents. Wacek's use of terms such as "hypothetically" and "epiphany" shows his relative comfort with language. In contrast to Wacek, the advanced language his parents use comes mainly from exposure to religion.

The audience should also visualize Wacek brooding in church with family members who forced him to go. The audience should then imagine Wacek and Zofia with their future children having baptisms performed just for the sake of placating their parents, just like the church wedding for the sake of family tradition.

46.

> EWA. Zofia, Dear, I'm sorry. I'm a little shocked. I asked my husband to visit—to stay—years ago. I asked and I asked. I waited and I waited. Now, Mr. Eleventh Hour thinks he'll be the knight in dented armor and save the dying damsel. I don't want to be saved by someone who could not be bothered to move his ass for fifteen years. So Zofia, have a nice visit in New York. (Wlodarczyk A13)

The audience should envision what Marek did in the fifteen years before he reunited with Ewa: spending time at home, drinking, seeing friends in the village, and being alone and depressed. Ewa's sarcasm shows what she thinks of Marek's long-awaited arrival. The audience should also imagine Ewa and Marek as a happy young couple, which is what Marek is trying to recreate. Ewa uses romantic medieval language to mock Marek's convoluted idea of a reunion.

47.

> WACEK. I can't abandon them.
>
> ZOFIA. Give them a couple of days to self-destruct and we can take care of the sole survivor—
>
> WACEK. —If there is a survivor. (Wlodarczyk A21)

The audience should see Ewa and Marek's relationship from the perspective of Zofia. She has just married into a family that is more contentious than she expected. The audience should anticipate the reckoning yet to come between Ewa and Marek when they are alone. The audience should wonder about Ewa and Marek's chance of surviving each other.

48.

> EWA. Zofia, are you growing coffee beans?
>
> ZOFIA. The cups don't match. I was looking for four of the same set.
>
> EWA. Those are good cups. Have you ever poured coffee before?
>
> WACEK. Zofia's family has hired help. Let her sit. Zofia, come sit.
>
> (Wlodarczyk A12)

The audience should see Zofia in her affluent home with servants taking care of daily needs. The second contrasting image that the audience should imagine is Ewa's everyday activities working as "hired help". Ewa and Zofia's divergent experiences exacerbate the maladroit start to their relationship.

49.

> WACEK. Look at all those channels. (Addressing Zofia.) Honey, how about something to eat?
>
> MAREK. (Muttering to himself.) Make yourself at home. I certainly will. I'm not going anywhere. How many channels? (Wlodarczyk A14)
>
> * * *
>
> MAREK. All I'm asking is that you don't kick me out tonight. I stay here, on the couch or chair, your choice. You don't have to take me back— just don't kick me out, because I'm not leaving tonight. You have two hundred channels and I've only seen eleven of them. (Wlodarczyk A31)

The audience should see Marek passively watching television for hours in Poland. Judging by Wacek's reaction, he shares his father's talent for zoning in on television. The final reference to television channels is a joke, but Ewa would consider it consistent with Marek's devotion to television and passive entertainments.

50.

> EWA. You people chose to come here. I will not spend your vacation apologizing.
>
> MAREK. I am not going home. I could barely afford the trip here.
>
> EWA. You can't stay here long. If my landlord knew, he'd raise my rent.

WACEK. Where do you suggest we go Mother?

ZOFIA. Wacek, we could go back. We can afford it.

EWA. Stay, but be quiet. You had to bring an extra person.

WACEK. Be nice to my wife. She never did anything to you and she makes me happy.

EWA. Zofia, Dear, I'm sorry. I'm a little shocked. I asked my husband to visit—to stay—years ago. I asked and I asked. I waited and I waited. Now, Mr. Eleventh Hour thinks he'll be the knight in dented armor and save the dying damsel. I don't want to be saved by someone who could not be bothered to move his ass for fifteen years. So Zofia, have a nice visit in New York. (Wlodarczyk A13)

The audience should imagine Wacek, Marek, and Zofia on their way to New York doing all of the activities that travel involves: packing, buying tickets, flying on a plane, collecting luggage, arriving at the airport, and their first look at the city. Ewa purposely uses terms that describe temporary stays to remind her family that they are not invited. 51.

ZOFIA. Let's all have a drink before we leave. I found good vodka…not the cheap stuff. Come on, Wacek.

WACEK. I don't drink anymore, you know that.

ZOFIA. No wonder he's an atheist. Make an exception for me.

WACEK. Religion and Vodka both numb you. I want to be fully aware of all of my senses. A conversation overheard, heat and cold on my skin, the

first moment when I wake up in the morning. That is the composition of my soul.

ZOFIA. Drinking alone is no fun. (ZOFIA and MAREK toast without WACEK.) (Wlodarczyk A20)

The audience should imagine the nights Wacek and Zofia spent partying with their college friends. Zofia, a graceful social drinker, is accustomed to watching Wacek drink nonalcoholic drinks while she and the rest of their friends enjoy alcohol.

52.

ZOFIA. Let's go.

WACEK. Wear the outfit we bought at the airport.

MAREK. You said you were broke.

ZOFIA. We were, after we went shopping.

WACEK. We'll eat at the café we passed.

MAREK. You kids need money?

WACEK. We're fine.

MAREK. You weren't fine when it was time to pay for the taxi.

(Wlodarczyk A18)

The audience should see Wacek and Zofia avoiding the responsibility of paying for incidental expenses. As a result, Marek is irritated that they seem to have money for frivolous expenses, while he pays for necessities, such as the taxi. The audience should see Wacek and Zofia's heedless focus on their own need to be entertained.

53.

(MAREK examines Ewa's apartment like a crime scene. The phone rings and he answers it.)

MAREK. Hello?... Is anyone there? Ewa's not home… This is her butler, who are you?

(MAREK hangs up the phone.)

WACEK. Who was it?

MAREK. Wrong number. This place is another universe.

WACEK. New York?

MAREK. No, this apartment. She lived without me here so long. Do you see a picture of me?

WACEK. Don't worry, you were never photogenic.

MAREK. You would think there would be some evidence of my existence—not even a postcard. (Wlodarczyk A18)

The audience should imagine Marek's frustration when he answers the phone and another man asks for Ewa. The audience should imagine Ewa's history of male visitors. Marek uses the term "evidence" that evokes a criminal investigation, meaning he is suspicious of Ewa's activities.

54.

ZOFIA. (She flirts with WACEK.) Do you like it?

MAREK. How much was it?

WACEK. (Addressing MAREK.) No more than that straight jacket of a suit you bought. (Addressing ZOFIA.) You look perfect. (Wlodarczyk A19)

The audience should imagine how uncomfortable Marek is in his stiff new suit. Wacek uses the term "straight jacket", describing clothing for a person institutionalized for mental reasons. The audience should see Marek's quest for Ewa through Wacek's critical eyes, as absurd as the new attire he chose for the monumental task.

55.

WACEK. We all know your parents live well. We're starting over, you and me, in a new city, the premiere city. We are staying.

ZOFIA. Everyday, we'll relive your hapless parent's mistakes.

(Wlodarczyk A21)

* * *

MAREK. If we make it here (Wlodarczyk A30)…

The image of Frank Sinatra's famous song should help the audience see that, despite the calamitous past, Marek actually believes in the legendary new beginning New York allegedly offers newcomers. This apocryphal hope especially applies to him and Ewa. Superficially, Marek is lightening the mood; he is, however, genuinely beseeching Ewa for reconciliation.

Likewise, the audience should also see that Wacek, despite his ostensible skepticism, shares his father's optimism of commencing anew in a city that seems to offer boundless opportunity for those willing to pay the severe price. The audience should imagine Ewa as she was fifteen years ago, a middle-aged woman recently arrived in New

York with the same enthusiasm Wacek has now. Wacek is trying to take the lead with Zofia and instill Zofia with the same determination for the future he feels. The audience should see Zofia's fear of falling into the same hopeless quagmire of Ewa and Marek's havoc.

D. Choice of Peculiar Characteristics I.E. Dialects

Characters in *Diaspora* speak in the way they do because of who they are inside, behind the lines of the dialogue, and how they react to circumstances. According to Hodge:

> The language of drama is highly subjective, inner language. Realism has used a wide variety of folk-speech patterns— dialects— in the interest of showing how people talk from their 'guts' and not from their minds. (27)

The meanings of what the characters say weave a world full of particular meaning, specific to each performance. Elam states:

> Indeed, a language is in reality a complex of codes ranging from denotational correlation rules to dialectal, paralinguistic, rhetorical, pragmatic and contextual rules, all of which go to make up the rich network of constraints regulating utterances and their meanings. Theatrical performance will engage a vast range of correlation rules of this kind-in effect, virtually all the codes operative in society are potential factors in the theatre. (44-45)

All determinants external and internal brew together to form a sentence, or even just a word, with a meaning all its own.

Marek's declarations are the most poignant verbal examples of the characters in *Diaspora* speaking the way they do because of their inner desires and backgrounds, combined with the exigent necessities of the moment. Marek's speech is forged by his village background. He is the only character who uses repeated rural references to animals, such as livestock and cats. Marek expounds:

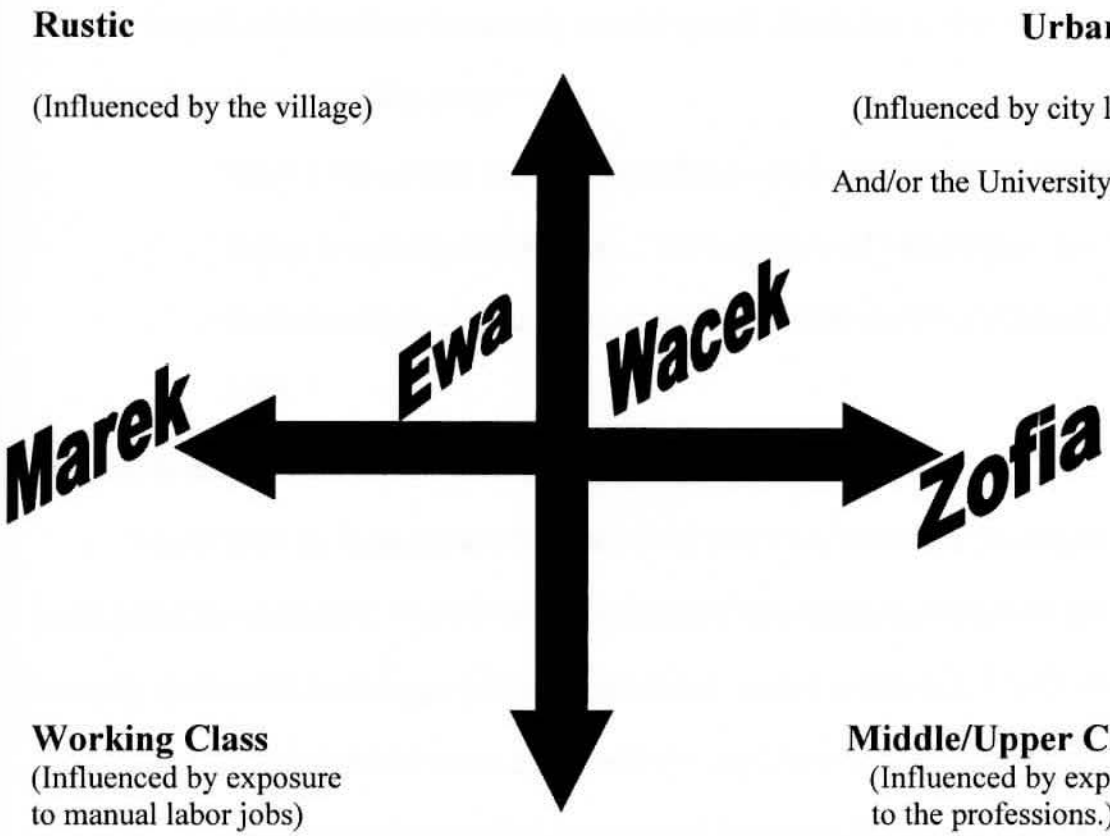
> Did you know we had livestock? After a while, we had to sell them or eat them, but for a while we had sheep… There were the stupidest animals. Not like horses. You have to earn the respect of a horse. You have to make a horse want to follow your lead, but a sheep will go anywhere they are lead. Checkmate. (Wlodarczyk A17)

Marek has the minimal education required for working-class jobs and stayed in the same town all of his life. Marek's lack of exposure to places and people outside of his isolated village preserves his vernacular. Marek's use of his native dialect is the *truest* representation of the family's background. To Ewa and Wacek, Marek is a candid mirror of their origins. Marek is "as is", without apology, unlike Ewa and Wacek who have made attempts to change or better themselves. An example of this disparity between Marek's authenticity and the others is when Marek loses patience with Wacek's ostentatious pontificating. Marek states, "This has nothing to do with you and shut up with atoms and the randomness. You think you're the first to think of that? Write a book instead of bothering me" (Wlodarczyk A16). As a result, Marek belongs both in the "Rustic" and "Working Class" sectors of the characteristics table.

Like Marek, Ewa has the minimal education required to work as a maid, but unlike Marek, Ewa had the ambition to leave her village in her early middle age to go to

New York for economic opportunity and her language evolved as a result. Unlike Marek, Ewa only once explicitly talks about her former village. She explains her frustration in a rare moment of vulnerability:

> I would have died in that god-forsaken village…Watching you drink away our future every name day…Watching you sit on the stoop with your useless friends and the stray cats. (Wlodarczyk A30)



The fifteen years she spent in New York has inevitably changed Ewa's speech patterns. This is evident when she breaks up with Kasper and uses American pop psychology terms. Ewa teases in casual language, "When are you going to leave your wife? Never mind, you're not marriage material" (Wlodarczyk A4). It is her exposure to New York that, despite her low-status job and lack of education, places her towards the

center of the characteristics table. She retains working class and village influences, but her aspirations and exposure to households that can afford hired help have changed the way she expresses herself. As a result, Ewa usually speaks in a concise and strictly controlled manner when dealing with her family. "If you're going to stay, you both need to contribute and take care of yourselves. Would you agree?" Ewa questions Wacek and Zofia (Wlodarczyk A21). Even though Ewa has never risen professionally from the cleaning job she took as a new immigrant, she at least once believed in her ability to improve herself, which affects her usually careful speech. She believes that the way she represents herself matters. She states:

> When I was young, I used to think that I could reinvent myself. I thought, 'I may be nothing, inside I am…' I thought I could make things new by the force of my will, but I've just been myself all my life. (Wlodarczyk A24)

This unguarded moment reveals Ewa's inner disappointment.

Wacek grew up in the same village as Marek and Ewa, but left as soon as he could get to the University. Wacek's bitter memories of the village remain, even though he rarely speaks of it in dialogue with other characters. In his monologue, Wacek reveals:

> I used to think he was a fool with the stupid stories about the village. When our only cow died, he mourned for a year. He passed out—drunk—so many times. Sometimes I covered him with a blanket. Other times, I left him spread out like a corpse on the sidewalk. One time I left him and it rained and he got pneumonia. That was his own fault and a little bit my fault—but almost entirely his fault. (A31)

Considering his inner conflict over his background and family, he perseveringly attempts to shape his own language and thoughts. Wacek contemptuously lectures his father, separating himself from his village roots, when he states, "I believe in Zofia and me, but *most* people are simply colliding molecules that stuck together… Free yourself. Biologically speaking, you're done with what nature requires" (Wlodarczyk A16). Marek gives his opinion of Wacek's habitual sermonizing. Marek states:

> When you were small, your mother and I thought you were unable to talk. All of the other children were babbling and you were sullenly sucking your thumb. The doctors said you might be mute. We hoped and we prayed you would start speaking. Now, you can't seem to shut up. (Wlodarczyk A16)

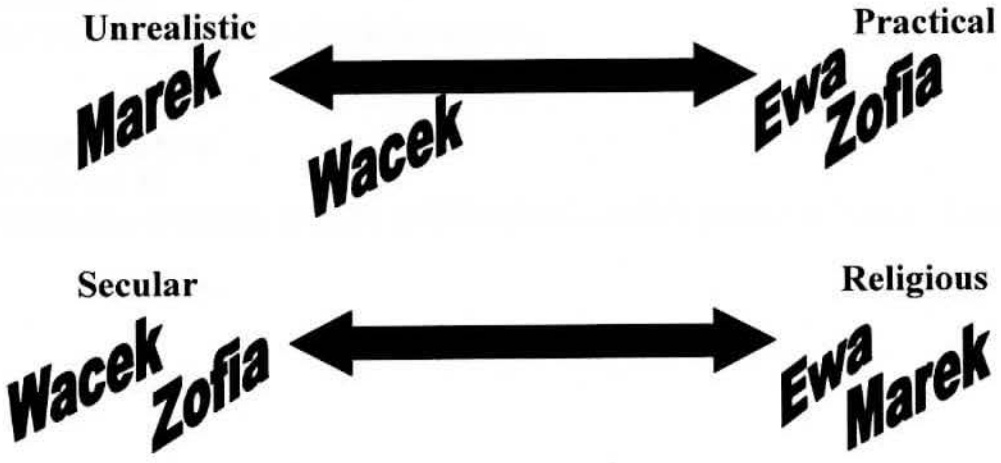
Zofia grew up in Warsaw with an upscale and educated lifestyle. If Marek's speech is the most rustic, then Zofia's speech is urbane at the other end of the spectrum; Zofia's speech, grammar, and enunciation is the most cosmopolitan of the disturbed group. Even when Ewa tries to humiliate Zofia, Zofia tries for some time to be polite. She is courteous from beginning. Zofia greets Ewa, "Hello. I've heard so much about you" (Wlodarczyk A10). Ewa, feeling under attack by Marek, replies, "That's curious. She knows all about me and she magically appears from nowhere… Excuse me, Dear. I haven't heard a murmur about you. You're tall for my son" (Wlodarczyk A10). Zofia says the least of all the characters, bottling up the tension from Ewa's verbal abuse and Wacek's lassitude. When Zofia has had enough, she states, "I won't go with you. You've been trying to shame me since I arrived, and I won't abide that" (Wlodarczyk A22).

Although Zofia mostly tries to be polite as an innate characteristic, she recognizes when she must defend herself. She says what Wacek and Marek are unwilling to admit:

> She's been doing it for years. She disappoints and betrays you. You think you're almost done with her. Then you remember how hard life was for her and she wins again. Life is hard for everyone. (A23)

Expressive dialogue characteristics communicate interpersonal conflicts and are further fueled by opposing personality traits of the warring characters in *Diaspora*. Marek is sincere and romantic, while Ewa is mercenary in her practicality. Both Marek and Wacek are idealistic, but they spend their verbal energy for opposite creeds. Wacek is sentimental about living in New York with Zofia, while Zofia is practical and skeptical about their move. It is the contrast between characters spoken opinions that provides idiosyncrasies and highlights the compelling intensity of the characters. Marek's tranquility and patient persistence, expressed in his idyllic speeches, makes Ewa's sharp temper, expressed in pithy sarcasm, more interesting by comparison. After all, what would daytime be without the somber contrast of night?

Expressive Dialogue Characteristics



E. The Sound of the Dialogue (For Each Unit)

Unit #1
Marek Arrives in Babylon
Beat #1—Beat #3
Marek is self-deprecating and hopeful. He is inspired to play the hero.

Unit #2
Kasper's Final Rendezvous
Beat #4— Beat #12
The banter between Kasper and Ewa is at once charming and sharp.

Unit #3
Marek Faces the Inquisition
Beat #13—Beat #16
The contrast between Ewa's iciness and Marek's warmth is the main component.

Unit #4
Ewa's Interrogation
Beat #17—Beat #23
Ewa is combative and they all suffer.

Unit #5
Ewa's Family Waits Alone
Beat #24—Beat #29
Ewa's family becomes acclimated to Ewa's intimate world.

Unit #6
Wacek and Zofia Plan Adventures
Beat #30—Beat #33
Wacek and Zofia plan an escape— or at least a date night— away from Marek and Ewa.

Unit #7
Ewa Determines Fate
Beat #34—Beat #36
Ewa forces Wacek and Zofia to follow her agenda.

Unit #8
Marek Illuminates Ewa
Beat #37—Beat # 42
Marek explains the obfuscations Zofia and Wacek told Zofia's parents to impress them.

Unit #9
Ewa Inveigles Wacek
Beat #43—Beat #45
Ewa shames Wacek into listening to her instead of Zofia, winning another battle against Zofia.

Unit #10
Marek Makes a Truce
Beat #46—Beat #50
Ewa allows the family, including Marek, to stay.

Unit #11
Wacek Starts Anew
Beat #51—Beat #52
Wacek accepts his responsibilities and defines himself.

F. Structure of Lines and Speeches

The structural rhythm of *Diaspora* consists of moods that range from reflective monologues to tense conversations with a competitive tenor. These contentious interactions build up to corybantic battles for dynastic control of the fragile family unit. *Diaspora* begins and ends with a monologue, which acts as an anchor like the sections of a musical sonata. Marek's opening monologue acts as an expository introduction; the sight and sound of Marek alone on a wintry street, surrounded by luggage and filled with gallant anticipation, sets the direction of the entire play. According to Mayo, "In each play you enter a different universe… the opening of the play sets the rules for that world and sets the expectations of the audience" (67). Marek absolutely affirms his valiant intent and establishes the expectations of the audience when he states, "I will take Ewa back to where wild flowers grow and I will mend her" (Wlodarczyk A3).

The hostile exposition begins with Ewa expelling Kasper, her lover, and subsequently admitting her unannounced husband, son and new daughter-in-law into her home; this is like the second movement of a sonata. The structure of the speeches and

conversations, constructed with angst, envy, rejection, and fear are all set to patterns of characters interrupting each other before the other can even finish a thought. As the characters reveal awkward truths, the dialogue grows in texture and complexity and is enriched by dissonance. This is the music of Ewa's family strife. The perfect example of this agitated staccato is the chess game between Marek, the beleaguered father and Wacek, the sardonic son.

> WACEK. Free yourself. Biologically speaking you're done with what nature requires. I mean, you have no reason to put yourself through the same torture again.
>
> MAREK. When you are your age—
>
> WACEK. Not again—
>
> MAREK. When you are your age, you think you have the time to tear apart and rebuild. Destruction seems so damn seductive. Lives can be so tangled together, they can't be severed. (Wlodarczyk A16)

When Ewa and Marek are finally alone towards the end of the play, the structure of the speeches delicately returns the leitmotif of Marek's longing for Ewa. He revisits the theme he set up in his monologue. He begs Ewa:

> You are flesh and soul in my hands. If you and I—if we are not true, then I am a lie. You are my covenant. You are my compass, my north and south. Where can I go, where you will not haunt me? If you abandon me now, I will die before you, even if they bury you first. If only you'd waited— (Wlodarczyk A30)

This is the recapitulation of *Diaspora's* idée fixe: will Marek triumph and win Ewa, vanquishing all of the obstacles in his way? The music of the dialogue resolves in the tonic when Marek symbolically states, "I like mine sweet and corrupted" (Wlodarczyk A31).

Wacek's monologue structurally resolves the action like a coda, which contains aspects of every word and action that comes before that moment. His monologue is structurally like Marek's monologue in that he summarizes his feelings about the conflicts that have past, what he intends to do about them, and expounds on his plans for the future. Wacek disparages his hapless father when he says:

> He lived in dreams and his dreams ruined him. I will be different. I will never be anyone's fool. I shape life by the force of my will. I will not be a victim to weak philosophy that can only create slaves. I will be the master of my life. I will be aware of every second of my brief existence—that was our bus. That was our bus. (Wlodarczyk A31)

III. Dramatic Action

A. Titles of Units

Unit #1
Marek Arrives in Babylon
Beat #1—Beat #3

Unit #2
Kasper's Final Rendezvous
Beat #4— Beat #12

Unit #3
Marek Faces the Inquisition
Beat #13—Beat #16

Unit #4
Ewa's Interrogation
Beat #17—Beat #23

Unit #5
Ewa's Family Waits Alone
Beat #24—Beat #29

Unit #6
Wacek and Zofia Plan Adventures
Beat #30—Beat #33

Unit #7
Ewa Determines Fate
Beat #34—Beat #36

Unit #8
Marek Illuminates Ewa
Beat #37—Beat # 42

Unit #9
Ewa Inveigles Wacek
Beat #43—Beat #45

Unit #10
Marek Makes a Truce
Beat #46—Beat #50

Unit #11
Wacek Starts Anew
Beat #51—Beat #52

B. Detailed breakdown of the action

See "Director's Beats".

C. Summary of the Action

Marek arrives in New York to bring Ewa, his estranged wife, back to Poland. Ewa has been living a liberated life in New York for fifteen years and is terminally ill; meanwhile, Marek was living and drinking at home in Poland. In order to reunite with Ewa, Marek offers their son, Wacek, as a peace offering. Zofia, the new daughter-in-law,

adds to the complexity of Ewa's turbulent existence. In the end, Wacek and Zofia decide to give life in New York an earnest effort, and Ewa tacitly allows Marek to remain as a houseguest. Their fate of their marriage remains a mystery, but Marek will likely wear down Ewa's refusal. They are meant for each other; who else would live with either of them?

IV. Character

A. Character— Marek

1. Desire

Marek's greatest desire is to possess Ewa once again. The action of claiming and healing Ewa is central to his sense of self and marital responsibility. He entreats her:

> You are flesh and soul in my hands. If you and I— if we are not true, then I am a lie. You are my covenant. You are my compass, my north and south. Where can I go where you will not haunt me? If you abandon me now, I will die before you, even if they bury you first. (Wlodarczyk A30)

It is his poignant actions that make Marek a hero cast in the mold of the Enlightenment who believes that he can, by action and moral sense, change his world and that of Ewa's. Even though it took him many years to gather the courage for this action, he is the classic "restless wanderer" pursuing his ideal which, according to Marek, symbolizes a virtuous resolution (Grenz 62-63).

2. Will

As the main instigator of action in *Diaspora*, Marek is willing to try the ridiculous and desperate. He spent years pusillanimously waiting for Ewa to return to him, when the actual obligation to reunite was his. Although the reason he did not follow Ewa is not

explicit, there are numerous technical reasons why the trip might have been problematic: legal and visa issues, financial issues, or Marek may not have wanted to leave Wacek with extended family at a tender age. Whatever the technical reason, dilatory Marek is not galvanized to reconcile with Ewa until he hears—through her mother— that Ewa is terminally ill. Marek belatedly assumes the role of traditional husband and decides to leave Poland to find Ewa and evince her that his return is permanent and his devotion immutable. He states his will to literally recreate their life together in his opening monologue:

> I will make her see that I can fix everything… She will come home and live with me again and it will be as if we were young and beautiful and whole. She will bring me breakfast and I will bring her wild flowers from the woods. There are no wild flowers here, only flowers wrapped in plastic and sealed in a box like a tomb. I will take Ewa back to where the wild flowers grow and I will mend her. (Wlodarczyk A3)

Another example of his will to rebuild their relationship is his resolute willingness to forgive Ewa's numerous infidelities in New York. He bargains with Ewa," I don't need to know. I'll forgive you if you don't tell me. We've been apart and I understand that you— I can't listen. I can forgive those desperate years" (Wlodarczyk A29).

3. Moral Stance

Marek feels that he and Ewa are still legally and, more importantly to him, spiritually married. Although part of his choice to travel to New York is that he has heard that Ewa is terminally ill, it also patent that he feels he a legitimately sacred claim to Ewa and that he earnestly loves her. Part of the proof of his sense of moral obligation to Ewa

is that once she left for New York, he did what he could to keep the shattered family unit together. He remained living with Ewa's infamous and indomitable Mother and raised their son in a bleak Polish village. Ewa describes their home town, "I would have died in that god-forsaken village… Watching you drink away our future every name day" (Wlodarczyk A30). His sense of virtue appears to have kept him faithful to Ewa during their fifteen year separation. Ewa expresses her bewilderment when she probes him on the subject, "Isn't it time you replace me? I figured you took a mistress years ago" (Wlodarczyk A29). Despite his foibles, it is the agglomeration of his indefatigable loyalty of his actions that is evidence of the sincerity of his commitment to Ewa. His actions are his poetry. Artaud would also consider the basic loyalty of his present and past activities a kind of poetry that can not be expressed in text. He writes:

> Beneath the poetry of the texts, there is the actual poetry, without form and without text… yet the poetry and efficacy of the theatre are exhausted least quickly of all, since they permit *action* of what is gesticulated and pronounced, and which is never made the same way twice. (Artaud 78)

Marek's irrevocable refusal to sign the divorce papers shows his unwillingness to sever their marriage and his authority over Ewa. He firmly states, "I won't sign, I won't break a true marriage", which is consistent with his bygone pattern of headstrong resistance (Wlodarczyk A29).

4. Decorum

Marek often presents himself carefully and has a sense of occasion. Even though he has never had much money, his tendency to live in a dream world allows him to present himself as someone more genteel than he actually is. He is proud and conscious

of his new suit (Wlodarczyk A8). He also feels it is critical that Ewa show him at least token politeness, despite their extensive separation. He reprimands Ewa:

> Have you forgotten your manners, living in Babylon so long? May I at least step in and warm up. The weather is vicious… May I come in? I think I do have a right. Remember, some years ago there was a wedding. We lived in a house and so on. For me to enter you need to remove yourself from the doorway. (Wlodarczyk A8)

Marek seems to have the diplomatic touch, even when it comes to choleric Ewa. He appreciates that she may not immediately accept him after so much of his recidivism towards alcohol, procrastination and melancholy, so he deftly bargains:

> All I'm asking is that you don't kick me out tonight. I stay here, on the couch or chair, your choice. You don't have to take me back; just don't kick me out, because I'm not leaving tonight. You have two hundred channels and I've only seen eleven of them. Let's be civil. Tonight, we're not mad. Tonight, you're not sick. We'll have a little cake, a little coffee. (Wlodarczyk A31)

His sense of chivalry also extends to defending Ewa against Wacek's biting reproach. Wacek's judgment of Ewa, compounded with his bellicose resentment over abandonment, is more than Marek's sense justice can bear. Flustered and frustrated, Marek excoriates Wacek:

> You weren't there, when we were young, how magnificent she was. You don't know why jealous people say… People say a lot of things and you don't always know why they say them. Some people have nothing better

> to do than judge. She had a hard life. You kids don't know what it is to have a hard, hungry life. You don't know, so don't assume what you don't know. (Wlodarczyk A19)

No discussion of Marek and decorum would be complete without mentioning Marek's penchant for alcohol. It is clear that he has not always behaved as the gentlemen he now believes himself to be. Both Ewa and Wacek are witnesses to his inconsistencies. Ewa testifies about his past behavior, "I would have died in that god-forsaken village… Watching you drink away out future every name day… Watching you sit on the stoop with your useless friends and the stray cats" (Wlodarczyk A30). "He passed out— drunk— so many times" attests Wacek (Wlodarczyk A31). Despite the virtuous intention of his travels, his family has legitimate justifications to doubt him.

5. Five Adjectives

Quixotic
Loyal
Unlucky
Persevering
Melancholic

B. Character—Ewa

1. Desire

Ewa, the eternal coquette, desires to be desired, which is an extension of her intense vivacity. She assiduously taunts Marek:

> I'll tell you everything about every one of them. There have been many men. I even forgot some of their names. When I arrived in New York years ago, men would miss their subway stop to be near me a little longer. I was like the Siren, drawing them to me. I felt some kind of raw power… After a while, regret hardly stings. Sometimes I forgot about you and

> home. I became an orphan and widow, gloriously alone, but never for long. (Wlodarczyk A29-A30)

Like the subject of *Olympia*, Manet's immortalized prostitute, Ewa (although *not* a prostitute) is like the girl in *Olympia* in that she is unapologetically herself— sexual, charming and slightly contemptuous. Like *Olympia*, Ewa has companions who cater to her to some degree; both *Olympia* and Ewa are acutely aware of the nature of their value and that her use will expire when they are no longer desirable. Ewa faces this fact, as she has faced all of the realities of her life, with shrewdness and incisive strategy (Eversley and Morgan 2007 10-13).

Her second desire at the apparent end of her life is a measure of isolation. When she is ending her amour with venal Kasper, She tells him, "I want to clear my head while I can. I want to face myself without distraction" (Wlodarczyk A7). This desire is, of course, interrupted later by the arrival of her discordant nuclear family.

2. Will

Ewa's will is to survive and do so as gracefully as possible. Although Ewa's income as a maid is limited, she does the best she can to adroitly keep her low-budget apartment neat and her personal appearance impeccable (Wlodarczyk A2-A3). An example of her perspicacity is when she ends her liaison with spurious Kasper when he asks for rent money; the relationship evidently costs more than it provides (Wlodarczyk A4-A6).

Although one of Ewa's desires is to be isolated at this time in her life, she concedes to allow her vexatious nuclear family to temporarily stay as long as they obey her precepts. She firmly commands Wacek, her cosseted son, and Zofia, her daughter-in-

law, that they will be required to work if they wish to stay in her apartment, "If you're going to stay, you both need to contribute and take of yourselves. Would you agree?" This seems sagacious to Ewa, because she had to do the same when she established herself in New York; Ewa evinces Wacek and Zofia to comply with her decree (Wlodarczyk A21).

3. Moral Stance

Ewa's sense of morality is concoction of Catholicism, traditional Polish culture, and her own brand of libertarianism. For example, it is important to her that her son, Wacek, profess the family's Catholic faith. She blames Marek, who did most of the parenting from the time Wacek was ten, for Wacek's atheism. She rebukes Marek, "He was my good little boy. You should have taught him" (Wlodarczyk 233). She maintains her own religious practice by being involved in church, even though her involvement is not always appreciated. An example of this is when one of the young priests thinks she was propositioning him. On a phone conversation with another priest from the church she defends herself:

> Lots of women in church wear the exact same dress… Maybe it does look different on me. I'm not trying to distract anyone… Maybe some people are easily distracted… I was not forcing myself on the new priest. No… Yes I did say that… Maybe it sounded like that… maybe it sounded like that... I didn't mean that… if he thinks that was a sexual overture, as you call it, he's socially inept… You can't fire me, I'm a volunteer.
> (Wlodarczyk A8)

It is significant to note that Ewa does not see her many New York affairs with various and sundry men— while she was still officially married to Marek— as morally misguided. Although she seems to direct the speech at Marek, she explains to Zofia why she does not feel ethically obligated to Marek:

> Zofia, dear, I'm sorry. I'm a little shocked. I asked my husband to visit— to stay— years ago. I asked and I asked. I waited and I waited. Now, Mr. Eleventh Hour thinks he'll be the knight in dented armor and save the dying damsel. I don't want to be saved by someone who couldn't be bothered to move his ass for fifteen years. (Wlodarczyk A13)

4. Decorum

Appropriate manners are dear to Ewa. This is a value she and Marek share since Polish etiquette is quite complex. Apart from the influence of her country of origin, good manners are also part of her concept of self; she sees herself as cosmopolitan lady who has made the best of her ignoble circumstances. She is artfully promiscuous; she knows when and how to end a romance that has reached a natural culmination. When she tries to leave Kasper, he improperly defies her judicious wishes. She incredulously admonishes Kasper:

> Don't you know how this goes? I tell you that I need to move on, that there's no future, etc.? You pretend to be disappointed, maybe we cry, etc., etc.? Have you ever been left by a woman? You can tell everyone that you left me. I'll confirm your story. You can say that I begged and that I… threw myself at your feet. No, that isn't realistic. Say that I drank out of despair. Make up your own story, just leave. (Wlodarczyk A7)

Another telling event that shows Ewa's ingrained appreciation of manners is when she expects Zofia, the younger female in the group, to be able to impeccably serve the group coffee. Zofia can not fulfill Ewa's expectations, because Zofia has servants in her home and has never had to provide hospitality by herself. Even the inferior quality of the china is less than what Zofia expects; the china does not match, but it is the best Ewa can afford. "Those are good cups. Have you ever poured coffee before?" Ewa brutally castigates Zofia. Even though she is dreadfully rough with Zofia, Ewa partly feels that she is helping by teaching Zofia the essential decorum to run a proper Polish household (Wlodarczyk A12).

Although Ewa ostensibly desires a divorce, it is imperative to note that she does not force Marek to leave her apartment, which would have legitimately been within her rights. This leaves the audience wondering if she wants to negotiate the divorce, if she keeps him for the sake of her son, or if she has some remnants of feeling for Marek. Despite their apparent truce, Ewa is careful that the sleeping arrangements are not improper from her suddenly unctuous point of view. Although they may be legally married, Ewa refuses to allow Marek to believe that he has any rights to the marital bed. She coordinates the sleeping arrangements for her tiny apartment like a maestro leading an orchestra and commands:

> They will be in my room. You will sleep in the chair. I'll take the sofa. On the other hand, the chair has a broken spring that will poke your back. If you want, you can have the sofa. Either way, your back will ache. (Wlodarczyk A28)

When Marek wants to know where Ewa will be sleeping, she seals her case by telling him, "Anywhere you're not sleeping" (Wlodarczyk A28).

5. Five Adjectives

Strategic
Authoritative
Feminine
Obstinate
Esthetic

C. Character Name— Wacek

1. Desire

At age twenty-five, with his education and new marriage, Wacek chooses to make life separate and superior to that of his parents. One example of his belief that he can make himself different is his abstinence from alcohol and religion, two compensations Wacek considers insubstantial crutches. After breaking Polish custom and refusing a toast, he self-righteously lectures Marek and Zofia:

> I don't drink anymore, you know that. Religion and vodka both numb you. I want to be fully aware of all my senses. A conversation overheard, heat and cold on my skin, the first moment when I wake up in the morning. This is the composition of my soul. (Wlodarczyk A20)

Confident and cynical, he declares:

> I will never be anyone's fool. I shape life by the force of my will. I will not be a victim to weak philosophy that only creates slaves. I will be aware of every second of my brief existence— that was our bus. That was our bus. (Wlodarczyk A31)

Despite his ardent individualism, he clandestinely yearns to care for his family, despite his sanctimonious frustrations. Speaking of his sheltered Zofia, he presciently asserts,

"She's not going to make it in New York. She needs me… and my mother… and my father" (Wlodarczyk A31).

2. Will

Wacek's choice of mate is one incontrovertible manifestation of his calculated choice to take a divergent path away from his parents; he is convinced that he can bypass his parent's entropy. At age twenty-five, Wacek is recently married. Although he inveighs against his parents for what he considers a volatile childhood, he feels undaunted by his choices and his ability to navigate around traps that ruined his parents. Marrying Zofia is a defiant gesture, because her privileged background is thoroughly opposite to his parents' lineage. Marek describes Zofia's upbringing, "It is a good match. She's from Warsaw. Both of her parents are judges. Their dacha is better than most people's regular home" (Wlodarcyk A25). Wacek is critical of his own parents' marriage, so Marek chides him about his discernible double standard. Wacek responds, "I believe in my own marriage. I believe in Zofia and me, but most people are simply colliding molecules that stuck together" (Wlodarczyk A16).

3. Moral Stance

Wacek's life path has been a calamitous one that began with a childhood beset by family conflicts that included his parent's de facto divorce, his father's intermittent alcoholism, his mother's abandonment and relative poverty in his dilapidated village with his imperious grandmother. By his own volition, much of his world view is shaped by master's degree in philosophy, which allows him to find replacements for the beliefs of his parents. He questions, "Look, think of me as a humanist or a realist. I always have been. What difference does a sacrament make if you don't believe in it?" in an attempt to

explain to his alienated mother why he would not want his future children to be baptized (Wlodarczyk A12). However, Wacek admits that his parents need what he considers "myths" or illusion. He knows that their laborious life is easier with certain conventional dogmas with which he personally disagrees. He equates both his parent's beliefs and their tumultuous relationship to his father's slavish love for vodka (Grenz 96). He explains in his monologue:

> My mother is his vodka. Even though he knows he will suffer, he needs her to numb him and make him feel real. I guess we all need a bit of anesthesia to get us through life. (Wlodarczyk A31)

4. Decorum

While insolent Wacek prides himself on honesty, he endeavors to be a diplomat when it comes to keeping the peace between Zofia, his new wife, and Ewa, his mother. He tries to adeptly play both sides without upsetting either formidable adversary. In his anxious mother's apartment, he does not seem to know what age he is. He was ten years old the last time he saw Ewa. He has evolved into an autonomous adult, but becomes unsure of himself in the somber presence of his bullying mother, who has been a source of continuous conflict, maternal abandonment and economic support. It is as if time reels backwards and he must go though a tangle of feelings from childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. He dauntlessly tries to not reveal his inner conflicts in his demeanor, but he betrays his vexation on several occasions.

After a tenuous introduction, Ewa orders Zofia to serve coffee. Wacek makes an anemic attempt to get Zofia out from under Ewa's impervious control. "No Zofia, stay. Mother, let her rest," he reasons with Ewa, but autocratic Ewa wins and Zofia gets up to

humbly serve. Wacek does not become braver until Ewa impugns him about his religion and secular philosophy; meanwhile, Ewa continues to subjugate Zofia. For Wacek, he can bear no more of his mother's pitiless machinations. He audaciously confronts her about the ignominious rumors he heard about her when she left. He mercilessly castigates her:

> I was a kid, what was I supposed to do? Should I have been philosophical about other boys calling my mother the whore of the village? Do you think new shoes from America make up for that? (Wlodarczyk A13)

This somewhat subdues Ewa, but she still tries to degrade Zofia by designating her "an extra person". Wacek valiantly commands Ewa, "Be nice to my wife. She never did anything to you and she makes me happy". Wacek finally establishes a boundary between Ewa and Zofia; He also regains a modicum of dignity and independence (Wlodarczyk A13).

After Ewa opportunistically left Poland ostensibly for economic reasons, Wacek tried to eradicate Ewa's indelible influence in his life. When he met Zofia's parents, he found his meager origins an embarrassing burden. From Wacek's point of view, his unrefined background is opposite of Zofia's entitled background. Wacek's parents are working-class from a dismal village; Zofia's parents have an elevated degree of financial and political power and are from Warsaw. Wacek's parents are rancorously separated; Zofia's parents are solidly together. More than all of that, he is extensively disgruntled with his mother, a maid with a sullied reputation back home in Poland. All of this leads up to Wacek and Zofia cunningly lying about his mother to her parents when they married. Neither of them wanted Ewa to meet her parents or even be in their lives.

As a result, they lied to Zofia's parents about Ewa. When Wacek and Zofia leave Ewa's apartment, Marek gently tries to explain that Wacek and Zofia said she was a "headmistress of a girl's school in Massachusetts" who "died on a field trip when the school bus crashed". Marek explains his acquiescing to their egregious plot:

> You went right away. You didn't suffer. He was making the most of opportunities. I didn't correct them, because there was the wedding going on and I didn't want to ruin his fresh start. I'm supposed to stop the celebration and the ceremony? (Wlodarczyk A25)

Wacek wanted to effortlessly fit in with his new in-law's aristocratic standards and Marek was a willing accomplice, probably partially motivated by the unremitting remorse of knowing that Wacek's childhood was painful and that many of Marek's childhood scars were caused by Marek's own failures.

This pattern of avoiding embarrassment has its seeds in Wacek's childhood for which Marek bears some of the blame. In Wacek's closing monologue, he morosely reminisces:

> I used to think he was fool with the stupid stories about the village. When our cow died, he mourned for a year. He passed out—drunk— so many times. Sometimes I covered him with a blanket. Other times, I left him spread out like a corpse on the sidewalk. One time I left him and it rained he got pneumonia. That was his fault and a little bit my fault— but almost entirely his fault. (Wlodarczyk A31)

It is evident that he also spent his childhood managing rumors about his father's alcoholism.

5. Five Adjectives

Proud
Sincere
Driven
Stubborn
Droll

D. Character Name— Zofia

1. Desire

Vivacious Zofia wants to start a new life with Wacek. Their impassioned courtship was quick and certain. She would have been happy staying in Poland. The only snag in her newly acquired contentment is staying with Ewa in New York. She plaintively reminds Wacek, "Remember what we left? Living in my home is a bit different than living in this rat hole of a flat" (Wlodarczyk A21). Her eager desire for a successful start for her and Wacek overwhelms her fierce distaste of the hostile situation in Ewa's cramped apartment, where she is considered an enemy rather than a member of the family.

Zofia desires acceptance or at least a sense of equality with her new in-laws. She and Marek seem to be natural allies in that he is careful to let her have say in challenging Ewa. Zofia attacks Ewa, "Wacek and I have options and you just want to keep us down so your fallow life doesn't seem so wasted. Insult me if you want, but I see through you" (Wlodarczyk A23).

2. Will

In the beginning of the play, Zofia behaves politely and seems quite willing to placate Ewa. Zofia's adjustment to the household is severely difficult. Upon her arrival, she sees no reason why she should not be readily accepted by Ewa and answers her questions cheerfully and gingerly. The quarrels with Zofia are usually started, one way or

another, by contentious Ewa. Once challenged however, resilient Zofia is willing to prove that she is up to any criterion Ewa puts in front of her. When she dares to work with Ewa as maid, Zofia states, "I can't wait to work with you…I need a few calluses" (Wlodarczyk 230).

Zofia's function in *Diaspora* is unique compared to the other characters in that she represents a couple of orthodox character types:

> The term norm or normative character… describes someone who is prudently adjusted to the world of the play… Greater awareness results from intuitive understanding than from direct knowledge… where their common sense serves as a reference point against which to compare the eccentric behavior of other characters. (Thomas 211)

Zofia is always the candid character who reminds delusional Marek and guilt-ridden Wacek of Ewa's manipulative patterns. This means Zofia partially functions as the classic *raisonneur,* even though she does not actually narrate. She corresponds to this classic category because she is a "doubter, wishing to offer sound advice through reasoning" and she "remains plausibly within the action" (Thomas 212). An example of how she serves as both a reference point of normalcy and a healthy cynic is when she accurately asserts:

> From what I've heard about your mother, she's always been in some kind of unfortunate condition. I'm sorry you're ill. I am, but only you could turn it into a weapon. She's using your pity against you… She's been doing it for years. She disappoints and betrays you. You think you're

almost done with her. Then you remember how hard life was for her and she wins again. Life is hard for everyone. (Wlodarczyk A23)

3. Moral Stance

Loyal Zofia feels a responsibility to be a diplomat and protector for Wacek on this odyssey. Zofia, however, is in a category of her own; she is the interloper, the new in-law with incompatible credentials compared with the quarrelsome family she is joining. Zofia persistently shows that she willing to overcome these disparities. She values her marriage to Wacek and thinks that her hope and excitement will overcome unforeseen complications and the opposition of his mother. She attempts to be friendly and compliant when she first meets matriarch Ewa, because it is the correct behavior in Zofia's sense of morality. In Zofia's relatively sheltered world, Zofia would never be regarded as an inconvenience or experience anything like Ewa's blatant rejection. The family dynamics could have been entirely different if Ewa had treated Zofia with respect and if Wacek had not been occupied with his own ancient tensions with Ewa; Unfortunately, Zofia is forced to vociferously defend herself. For example, Ewa attempts to demean Zofia by insisting that Zofia "temporarily" work as a maid with Ewa. Zofia resists Ewa's repeated attempts to dominate her when she declares, "Wacek and I have options and you just want to keep us down with you, so your fallow life doesn't seem so wasted. Insult me if you want to, but I see through you" (Wlodarczyk A23). This necessary outburst breaks Zofia's own etiquette codes, but she has never had to brave the kind of vitriol Ewa offers in lieu of hospitality. Zofia also feels she must protect Wacek in his vulnerable state.

Another reason Ewa is harsh—even openly rude— with Zofia is that blithe Zofia represents a prosperous future that excludes Ewa. If Ewa and Marek and their internecine life together is the past, Wacek and Zofia are the possibilities Ewa and Marek have missed. Together, Zofia and Marek are immeasurable potential. The elevated expectations of coming from a generation with education and the assumption that life will offer opportunity sets them apart from Ewa and Marek, who were only educated to the point of working at industrial, working-class jobs in the Soviet Union. Wacek and Zofia, but especially Zofia, is determined to avoid the lamentable choices of Wacek's parents. Zofia prudently warns Wacek that if they remain living with his parents in order to please his mother, "Everyday we'll relive your parents' hapless mistakes" (Wlodarczyk A21).

Zofia is also analogous to the third party looking in from the outside. All of the other characters have been embroiled in the spectacle of Ewa's universe. Unlike all of the other characters, Zofia is looking at Ewa's family and life with unblinking scrutiny. Because of her fresh point of view, she is able to analyze the exigency of Ewa's family. This is a threat to Ewa, who like Zofia, is accustomed to a certain kind of considerate treatment from her inner circle.

4. Decorum

Life in Ewa's apartment is opposite of Zofia's expectations of harmonious family life and affluent creature comforts. Even when Ewa is trying to be tensely polite, she has antipathy towards Zofia. She is surprised by the judgment in Ewa's question about what she does. Zofia sees herself as defined by her influential family, her upper class status, and her education. Although she does not yet have a job as an engineer, she is confident in her ability to prosper. Ewa can not understand this insouciant confidence, since she has

never had any such safe assurances in her restless life and has had to work to survive; as a result, Ewa interprets Zofia's composed certainty as arrogance (Wlodarczyk A10). Despite this hostile habitat, Zofia still tries to behave in discreet manner. After Ewa charges out of the apartment, Marek suggests that Zofia and Wacek stay in the only bedroom in the cramped hovel. Zofia responds, "Are you sure? I'm taking over her bedroom and she already doesn't like me" (Wlodarczyk A15).

Zofia is socially and physically uncomfortable in Ewa's crowded apartment. For Wacek's benefit, Zofia tries to keep her aristocratic poise. At least she has the comfort of knowing Marek tacitly supports her, but preeminent Ewa runs the agitated household and Zofia is an unwelcome trespasser. Zofia is justifiably angry that Ewa expects her and Wacek to do manual labor, but becomes inured to the dishonor to show combative Ewa that she will not be another one of her conquests (Wlodarczyk 230). Desperate Zofia tries to convince Wacek that they should leave and return to their comfortable and prosperous life in Poland. Wacek repudiates her, "We all know your parent's live well. We're starting over, you and me, in a new city, the premiere city. We are staying" (Wlodarczyk A21). Determinedly sitting on her suitcase, Zofia tenaciously refuses:

> Wacek, I can't stay… I'm thinking about a mint on my pillow, fresh white towels and breakfast delivered by room service— just like the resort we visited when we went skiing. That was perfect. Remember? (Wlodarczyk A28)

Only the promise of a nice evening out and chardonnay assuages her.

5. Five Adjectives

Privileged
Trustworthy
Feisty
Loving
Fearless

E. Character Name— Kasper

1. Desire—

Narcissistic Kasper desires gratification without the price of admission. He is Ewa's lover and, by all indications, neither he nor Ewa is committed to anyone but themselves. Like Ewa, it is vitally important for Kasper to be desired and perceived as the winner in any liaison. Crafty Ewa also needs to be in full control in romantic relationships, so their alliance is a challenging tango. When Ewa leaves him, he keeps insisting that he was going to leave first. Understanding his ego, Ewa sarcastically soothes him:

> You can tell everybody that you left me. I'll confirm your story. You can say that I begged and that I…threw myself at your feet. No, that isn't realistic. Say that I drank out of despair. Make up your own story, just leave. (Wlodarczyk A7)

2. Will

Opportunistic Kasper is determined to look out for himself with charm and calculating schemes. Although he has been in business, his fortunes have risen and fallen several times over. One example is that he has been in debt with the I.R.S. (Wlodarczyk 212). He suavely wrangles $500 for his rent from Ewa. He promises Ewa, "As soon as some deals I'm working on come through for me, I *will* pay you back. You inspire me" (Wlodarczyk A4).

3. Moral Stance

Libertine Kasper is comfortably ambiguous on morals, until Ewa breaks up with him. When Ewa starts giving conciliatory excuses for leaving him, such as "There isn't any future", Kasper panics. Incredulous, he asks Ewa, "You expect us to marry?... Because you're taken, but if you want marriage". Kasper, not accustomed to being jilted by women, besets Ewa with objective evidence of her moral failings by viciously teasing, "Is it because you're sick? If you want to die pure and repentant, you have a lot of catching up to do" (Wlodarczyk A6).

4. Decorum

Sanguine Kasper, the archetypal cad, is graceful even in situations that would be awkward for other mortals. He can weasel rent money out of Ewa, get dumped, and still view himself as the prowling tomcat in charge. He takes Ewa's rejection with disbelief and is captivating even when pleading. He jokes, "Pop psychology ruins all of my relationships. Everyone wants a soul mate. I'm good for you and you're good for me… Everyone needs a vice" (Wlodarczyk A7).

5. Five Adjectives

Handsome
Amoral
Promiscuous
Desirable
Impecunious

V. Ideas

A. Meaning of the Title and the Meaning of the Play

The meaning of the play *Diaspora* is, as the French expression goes, "The heart wants what it wants"; no obstacle is too great for the one who loves. Even if, from the outside, what the heart wants seems impossible, desire and will consume obstacles and

doubt in the effort to attain that which is beloved. Marek's heart wants Ewa, even though any outside observer would judge their union futile. Marek, however, follows his inner compass and pursues his ideal. The dismal irony of Marek winning Ewa back is that even *if* he recaptures her affection, he has limited time with Ewa, who is terminally ill. To do anything else, however, would deny his personal truth.

The meaning of the title *Diaspora* encompasses Ewa's journey, her reinvention of herself, and her myriad difficulties. It also becomes a theme for the rest of her family, who eventually follows her to New York. Although the condition of the family is obvious anarchy, Marek has embarked on this odyssey for the solitary purpose reinventing his bond with Ewa. Latently hiding behind Marek's phlegmatic countenance is a tenacious man who will not give up on Ewa until death wins. He sees himself as a kind of durable warrior like the title character of the poem "Ulysses"; like the hero of the poem, Marek strives on to find meaning the relationship that has been the blessing and torment of his life. In Tennyson's words:

> Death closes all: but something ere the end,
> Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
> Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
> .....
> Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
> We are not now that strength which in old days
> Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
> One equal temper of heroic hearts,
> Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. (50-53, 65-70)

B. Philosophical Statements in the Play

1. Death

Ewa's statements about death show her philosophy about religion and life. She stoically and courageously prepares to die. Although Ewa is guarded about her emotions throughout most of the play, she and Marek have a meeting of minds in which they both reveal their psyche. Ewa concedes:

> What a wasted life…a few years to earnestly flail around and drown. To be done and fall on mercy may be a relief. To me, the end is a friendly ghost floating around, welcome as long as it goes quickly and takes me with it. Going on would be worse. Everyday is more cumbersome than the next… (Wlodarczyk A24)

2. Perception of Self

Wacek and Ewa are both especially confident creatures, but each has a contrasting sense of self-awareness. They are at different points on the same continuum. Ewa's conception of herself has evolved since she arrived in New York. She elucidates:

> I though cleaning other people's houses was temporary once. At first I thought, I can stand it for a month. Then, I thought, a year is nothing. A year is everything…When I was young, I used to think that I could reinvent myself. I thought, 'I may be nothing, inside I am…' I thought I could make things new by the force of my will, but I've just been myself all my life. (Wlodarczyk A24)

Wacek, however, still feels that he has control over the mysterious forces in life. He assuredly states:

> I shape life by the force of my will. I will not be a victim to weak philosophy that can only create slaves. I will be the master of my life. I will be aware of every second of my brief existence—that was our bus. That was our bus. (Wlodarczyk A31)

3. Biology and Love

The greatest contradiction in philosophical statements on love is between Wacek and Marek. They actually share similarities in their sincerity and intensity. In their own way, each man is deeply sentimental. Wacek antagonizes Marek when he tells him that it is prudent to leave Ewa, despite the prognosis of her illness and limited time. Wacek defies Marek:

> Dad, I would understand if you just left her. I love my mother, but I am too old for you to save the family for my sake. What a farce you people are, marionettes acting out a childish wish… That is why I don't believe in marriage. Free yourself. Biologically speaking, you're done with what nature requires. I mean, you have no reason to put yourself through that torture again. (Wlodarczyk A16)

Marek retorts:

> When you are your age— When you are your age, you think you have the time to tear apart and rebuild. Destruction seems so damn seductive. Lives can be so tangled together, they can't be severed… Whether you cross the street or not, whether you sleep in or wake up… What you don't know at

> your age is whether you have coffee or tea can change you entire life. (Wlodarczyk A16).

Despite Wacek's love for Zofia, he can not understand Marek's loyalty to Ewa. "Biologically speaking" he sees his parents as simpletons who accidentally had a child, just animals in the wild do. Wacek, of course, sees himself as exceptionally different from his parents. Wacek brazenly preaches, "I believe in my own marriage. I believe in Zofia and me, but *most* people are simply colliding molecules that stuck together" (Wlodarczyk A16).

4. Religion

Wacek, although perceives himself to be ascetic and logical, is quite passionate and poetic about his philosophies, perhaps to a level that rivals his father's fervent beliefs in love, fate, and his Catholic faith. Wacek, trying too entirely too hard to be the antithesis of his father, sermonizes:

> Religion and Vodka both numb you. I want to be fully aware of all of my senses. A conversation overheard, heat and cold on my skin, the first moment when I wake up in the morning. That is the composition of my soul. (Wlodarczyk A20)

Using religious promises of the afterlife, Marek endeavors to comfort Ewa, who is listening more to herself than Marek. He chooses not to be patently optimistic, which only exasperates suffering of those going through travails. He quietly muses, "There's nothing like the peace of the unborn or the deep silence of the tomb" (Wlodarczyk A24).

C. Symbolism

1. Bus vs. Taxi

All of the debates over modes of transportation are symbols of economical and psychological control over who goes where, how they get there, and who pays for it. The first example is when Zofia, Marek, and Wacek arrive at Ewa's apartment building. Zofia and Wacek mirthfully scamper away, forcing Marek to pay for the taxi. This slip of the mind on the part of Zofia and Marek may have been unintentionally due to excitement, but end result is that Marek must take on the onus of his patriarchal obligation and pays the deceitful cab driver, who seems to have extorted an excessive cab fare. Marek has not forgotten this slight, and mutters about the cost when the trio is ensconced in Ewa's apartment (Wlodarczyk A18). When Zofia and Wacek finally leave for a jocund night together, deciding between a taxi and a bus becomes an economic and marital power struggle over time and resources. Zofia is dressed for an evening out and her delicate shoes were not meant for standing in the icy January slush and waiting for a menial bus. Even though Wacek knows Zofia has the money for a taxi, he knows that they must preserve their resources because the duration of their New York venture is unknown (Wlodarczyk A31).

2. The Game of Chess

The game of chess is a symbol of the continuous competition between father and son. As Wacek and Marek play chess, Marek uses the time to break Wacek's concentration with unsolicited counsel about how to live. Based on Wacek's annoyance, it is no doubt that he has already heard many of Marek's anecdotes. Wacek counters with wounding allegations about Ewa and her marriage to Marek. Ultimately, Marek wins the

chess battle, but it is dubious whether Wacek will follow his father's advice until life imparts harsh lessons, from which no one is exempt (Wlodarczyk A15-A17).

3. Soviet Condom from 1989 and Documents

When Marek's wallet is stolen in the previous action, he is not at all distressed. As he states, "I keep my money and documents in my underwear. The only thing in my wallet is a Soviet condom from 1989, which tells you how interesting my life has been since Ewa left me to make a living" (Wlodarczyk A3). Marek hiding his documents represents his distrust of people and institutions, perhaps part of the worldview of living through an era in which citizens needed documents to prove their identity in submission to authority. The Soviet condom is a symbolic relic from the life he and Ewa had in common; both of them grew up and worked as adults at the bottom of the social order in the Soviet Union. The date 1989 indicates the general time period in which the Soviet order expired, a process that took several years. *Diaspora* takes place in 2005, fifteen years after Ewa left Poland, which is just after Marek purchased the condom, originally of questionable Soviet quality and now a decade and a half old.

4. Cats and Character

The symbol of a cat is present several times in the context of both superstition and personal characteristics. When describing Ewa's predisposition for hardship, Marek describes Ewa, "Frankly, she is an unlucky woman, a magnet for black cats and the evil eye" (Wlodarczyk A3). Ewa's character description imputes feline qualities to Ewa. The author states, "Her eyes flicker and scrutinize her surroundings like a cat calculating whether to pounce or nap" (Wlodarczyk A2). Marek overtly equates Ewa with a cat:

> When I was a kid, I had a cat. She scratched my arm, pissed the house, and meowed like a she-devil. I loved that cat…Rumor has it; she killed the neighbor's cat. One night, I heard her screech in the backyard and I never saw her again. You've clearly lost the game. (Wlodarczyk A16)

Stray cats are also a symbol of the depressing village life Ewa left behind in Poland. She rebukes Marek, "I would have died in that god-forsaken village…Watching you drink away our future every name day…Watching you sit on the stoop with your useless friends and the stray cats" (Wlodarczyk A30). Feral cats are an effective symbol of forgotten small towns left fallow by progress.

5. A Suspect Wedding Ring

The symbol of wedding ring lost like spare change in Ewa's couch is testament to Ewa's infidelities. After finding the incriminating ring, Wacek torments Marek, "It's a man's ring. I saw a man in the hallway when we arrived" (Wlodarczyk A19).

6. New Clothes

New clothing, mainly Marek's suit, is a symbol of his desire to recreate himself or at least choose the image he presents to others. Marek's suit has a particular purpose. The author describes Marek's appearance in the stage directions, "Marek wears an uncomfortably new suit. The starched collar and new tie seem to wear him, especially while he stands in the coldness of Ewa's exacting scrutiny" (Wlodarczyk A8). The purpose of the suit is to impress Ewa, but Marek later feels that the effort is futile. Wacek mocks Marek's attire compared with Zofia's stunning young beauty in her new clothes. Marek responds, "Why shouldn't you have nice things? No point in new clothes when the body is too old to honor them. New wine in old skins" (Wlodarczyk A19). For Marek, the

suit is a symbol of masculine grace and success. He affirms, "All a man needs in life is a well-cut suit and a well-built woman" (Wlodarczyk A20).

7. Pop Psychology and Media Icons

Pop psychology is a symbol of the postmodern American zeitgeist. When Ewa uses the popular term "enable", Kasper admonishes her, "Stop watching Dr. Phil. Psychology is terribly for your peace of mind" (Wlodarczyk A5). "When reasoning with Ewa, Kasper states, "Pop psychology ruins all of my relationships. Everyone wants a soul mate. I'm good for you and you're good for me" (Wlodarczyk A7).

Besides Dr. Phil, the ubiquitous Oprah is a symbol of media influence and feminism. Marek warns Wacek about the transformation brought on by listening to American media, "She won't listen to you like that once she's here a while. American women don't. Oprah tells them not to" (Wlodarczyk A15). Marek continues his forecast, "After a while living here, she won't come when you call…Woman here don't do that. They make the men scrub the toilets. You wait until she stops cooking. You may have to retrain her" (Wlodarczyk A17).

8. The City of New York and "Babylon"

The city of New York is symbol of Ewa's effort to recreate her life. It is also a symbol a Wacek's attempt to beget a new life for him and Zofia. Ewa describes how she felt when she first left for New York:

> When I was young, I used to think that I could reinvent myself. I thought, 'I may be nothing, inside I am…' I thought I could make things new by the force of my will, but I've just been myself all my life. (Wlodarczyk A24)

Even though Zofia wants to go home to Poland, Wacek insists that they stay in New York, away from Zofia's parents' influence. He ordains, "We all know your parents live well. We're starting over, you and me, in a new city, the premiere city. We are staying" (Wlodarczyk A21).

New York is no promised land for Marek. He plans to take Ewa back to Poland (Wlodarczyk A3). He partly blames New York, the iniquitous unknown, for his separation from Ewa. After he shocks Ewa by arriving unannounced at her apartment, he scolds Ewa, "Have you forgotten your manners, living in Babylon so long? May I at least step in and warm up? The weather is vicious" (Wlodarczyk A8). Marek's choice of the ancient concept of "Babylon" means that he ominously considers New York a corrupt place that preys on the weak.

9. Religion, Baptism and Voodoo

The institution and traditions of the Catholic Church are significant symbols in the lives of Ewa's family members. A potent example of this is that even though Wacek "left the church", major aspects of his life are still dictated by it. Even though he is an atheist, he marries in the church to please Zofia's parents. Although he and Zofia do not even have children yet, Ewa is already pestering him about the rite of baptism. Wacek sarcastically placates Ewa when he says, "What difference does a sacrament make if you don't believe in it? When we have these hypothetical children you can immerse or sprinkle them or whatever voodoo you like" (Wlodarczyk A12).

Even liberated Ewa's course is set by the Catholic Church. Her religion indicts her, comforts her, and binds her. Wacek censures recalcitrant Ewa when he says:

> Mother, I am not a puppet. What has your religion done for you?... You aren't exactly canonized. When you left, it took me years to live down your reputation—the speculation and gossip. (Wlodarczyk A13)

When dealing with her terminal illness and regrets about her life, her Catholic beliefs ameliorate her suffering. In an unguarded conversation with Marek, she explains:

> What a wasted life…a few years to earnestly flail around and drown. To be done and fall on mercy may be a relief. To me, the end is a friendly ghost floating around, welcome as long as it goes quickly and takes me with it. Going on would be worse. Everyday is more cumbersome than the next… When I was young, I used to think that I could reinvent myself. I thought, 'I may be nothing, inside I am…' I thought I could make things new by the force of my will, but I've just been myself all my life. (Wlodarczyk A24)

Ewa's trap also stems from her religion. She and Marek both consider themselves sincerely Catholic and they married in the Catholic Church, which means divorce is prohibited except in cases of adultery. She uses this canon to try to legitimately rid herself of Marek. She wounds Marek in order to free him:

> The church would not even fault you. That was not the mailman. Would you like the truth? I'll tell you everything about every one of them. There have been many men. I even forgot some of their names. When I arrived in New York years ago, men would miss their subway stop to be near me a little longer. I was like the Siren, drawing them to me. I felt some kind of raw power. (Wlodarczyk A29)

To Marek their bond is hallowed, whatever mistakes they both made in the past. He confesses to Ewa, "You are my covenant" (Wlodarczyk A30).

10. Cleaning and Social Status

Ewa is a maid, a position that symbolizes her place in human food chain. Although she may have a regal bearing, she spends her days mopping, scrubbing, and washing other people's messes, other people's dirt. Whatever her income is, her low status job requires her to clean toilets and dirty clothes. Zofia's experience is opposite to Ewa. Zofia has maids, just like Ewa, in her house to serve her family and has never has to learn any significant domestic skills. The reference to "calluses" is a literal symbol of menial skills.

Wacek and Zofia's dependence on Zofia's parent's money and status is symbolic of their childishness. They are trying to break out on their own by following Marek to New York, only to become ensnared in Ewa's oppression.

11. India

Ewa's reference to India symbolizes the efficient and mobile global economy. Zofia resists Ewa's "help" of finding Zofia a job and insists that her training as an engineer will conserve her from harm. Ewa acrimoniously responds, "—and I'm trained as a ballerina. If you want an engineering job, go to India. Here, people clean, sell things, or fix things that are made elsewhere" (Wlodarczyk A22).

12. Sinew and Marrow and Ties that Bind

Marek and Ewa have known each other most of their life and have become symbiotic in their differences and similarities. Despite the intermittently discordant relations, they complete each other as many couples who have been long married do.

Marek's statement symbolizes their bond, "I try to forget her, but she is woven into the fiber of my skin…she is the marrow in my bones and the sinew in my muscles" (Wlodarczyk A3). While Wacek and Marek are playing chess, Marek responds to Wacek's facile rejection of Ewa. Marek protests, "When you are your age, you think you have the time to tear apart and rebuild. Destruction seems so damn seductive. Lives can be so tangled together, they can't be severed" (Wlodarczyk A16).

13. Plastic Surgery and Popular Culture

Kasper's quip about plastic surgery symbolizes the American predilection for fixing the surface appearance of people without touching the inner person. In other words, appearances matter. In their constant vying for control of each other, charming Kasper maliciously teases Ewa, "Look at that face. You are a wicked angel… I mean it. Poetry is in your face. A face like this can't be designed with a knife. Although you could …" Kasper then pulls at Ewa's face in the direction of a facelift (Wlodarczyk A4).

14. IRS and the Structure of Law and Order

When Ewa's immigration status is legally resolved, her main concern seems to be reporting her income and paying taxes instead of working for unreported cash as she has habitually done. Ewa also mentions that Kasper had a debt to IRS. This apprehension of the IRS symbolizes a powerfully intimidating aspect of the legal order in the United States (Wlodarczyk A5).

15. The Spare Key

Lovers exchanging keys to their private home is symbol of giving someone access to a person's inner world at any time. When Ewa demands her "only spare key" back from Kasper, who has become obnoxiously entrenched in Ewa's apartment, she is

denying him access to her home and, as a result, admission to her life. The return of the key is ostensibly the end of their affair (Wlodarczyk A7).

16. The Alter Guild

Ewa's involvement in her parish, particularly the Alter Guild, is symbolic of the comfort Ewa takes in the traditions of the Catholic Church. When one of the parish priests has the effrontery to exclude her from the Alter Guild for behavior and dress, she takes it as a personal injury (Wlodarczyk A8).

17. The House and Domestic Life

When Marek tries to justify his entry to Ewa's apartment, he uses the history of their domestic family life, as symbolized by their house in Poland. He demands of Ewa:

> May I come in? I think I do have a right. Remember, some years ago there was a wedding, we lived in a house and so on. For me to enter, you need to remove yourself the doorway. (Wlodarczyk A8)

Even though Ewa left Poland, she retained control of their house by leaving her mother to raise Wacek and supervise Marek. Marek laments his lack of freedom. When Ewa questions why he did not take a mistress during their long separation. He complains, "With your mother living in the house? Leaving me with your mother was the worst wound you inflicted" (Wlodarczyk A29).

18. The Lottery and Hope

The lottery, the intangible hope of the average working person, is a symbol Ewa's insatiable desire for anything better than what she has. She left Poland when she was not satisfied with her lot. As shown by the conversation with Kasper, she gets rids of lovers when they bore her. Ewa believes, despite her verbal cynicism, that something better may

be possible. When she is initially probes Marek about why he returned, his answers fail to satisfy her logic. "You won the lottery?" she curiously asks, but Marek never has been that fortunate (Wlodarczyk A9).

19. Carrying the Luggage and Chivalry

When Ewa first meets Zofia, she insists that Zofia sit with her instead of carrying the luggage because Ewa believes that men should carry packages for women, open doors, and all of the other privileged favors that were the etiquette when Ewa was a young enchantress. This is part of her identity as a woman and the order she thinks ought to remain in place. Ewa say to Zofia, "Stay with me. Let the men do the heavy lifting. Let's get to know each other" (Wlodarczyk A10). The carrying of the luggage is symbolic of Ewa's chivalric expectations.

In Ewa's eyes, Marek has failed to live up to her ideals of masculinity. For all of Marek's beautiful words, he did not come to Ewa until the exigency of Ewa's terminal illness. Ewa bemoans Marek's behavior:

> I'm a little shocked. I asked my husband to visit—to stay—years ago. I asked and I asked. I waited and I waited. Now, Mr. Eleventh Hour thinks he'll be the knight in dented armor and save the dying damsel. I don't want to be saved by someone who could not be bothered to move his ass for fifteen years. (Wlodarczyk A13)

Ewa uses of chivalric and ancient language in the above passage such as "dying damsel". The phrase "knight in dented armor" symbolizes Marek's failure to please Ewa (Wlodarczyk A13).

20. Abortion and Pregnancy

The characters in *Diaspora* discuss fertility and the control over it twice; abortion and pregnancy outside of marriage signify social and religious shame. Ewa, who has not heard of Zofia until she arrived with Wacek and Marek, suspiciously assumes that Zofia snared Wacek by having a baby. "Is she pregnant?" Ewa crassly assumes to embarrass Zofia. Marek defends Zofia by saying, "No, we just knew. When you know you know and we knew" (Wlodarczyk A11). Later, when Ewa and Wacek heatedly dispute religion, Wacek reminds her that there had been rumors in the village about Ewa having an abortion. No one confirms or denies if Ewa did have an abortion; Wacek, motivated by his own repressed pain, uses Ewa's village notoriety and this pernicious rumor as an innuendo to disgrace Ewa.

21. Molecules and Emotion

Wacek claims to see people as oblivious drudges who think they are making independent decision, but are really captives of their brief mortal nature. While playing chess with Marek, Wacek exhorts:

> I believe in my own marriage. I believe in Zofia and me, but *most* people are simply colliding molecules that stuck together…Free yourself. Biologically speaking you're done with what nature requires. I mean, you have no reason to put yourself through the same torture again.
> (Wlodarczyk A16)

Wacek, as usual, sees himself as the exception; he thinks he is more lucid and enlightened than other people and uses "molecules" as a symbol for what he thinks most

people are: inert followers. It is in this state of mind that Wacek condemns his parents as "marionettes" (Wlodarczyk A15).

22. The Kitchen and Lingerie

Marek uses the kitchen as a symbol of feminine comfort, like a womb, and an enlightening place which can reveal character. "A woman's kitchen tells you more about her than her lingerie. What secrets are in cupboard? What does she reveal and what does she hide?" Marek deliberates (Wlodarczyk A14). A kitchen discloses the clandestine habits of the household, financial status, and everyday proclivities.

23. Ewa's Fake Death

The obfuscations Zofia and Wacek told Zofia's parents about Ewa are symbolic of Wacek's sense of abject shame and unrelenting anger towards his mother. When Wacek and Zofia are out partying in New York, Marek cautiously tells Ewa the entire history of Wacek and Zofia lying about Ewa to Zofia's parents. Their inexorable lies snowballed and became too complex to retract. By the time Wacek and Zofia were hastily engaged, they dove deeper into their subterfuge about Ewa being an educated headmistress at an exclusive girl's school in Massachusetts. Probably when Zofia's parents wanted to meet Ewa during the engagement, Wacek and Zofia told Zofia's family that Ewa had passed away. According to Zofia, "Once you say someone is dead, it is difficult to take it back" (Wlodarczyk A27).

24. The Bedroom and Sleeping Arrangements

Ewa's inner sanctuary is her bedroom, signifying the fragment of Ewa's mind and heart that she keeps to herself. It is offstage, but plays an important political role in the interactions of Ewa's family. Ewa decides who sleeps where and how comfortable they

will be. Zofia learns that she and Wacek will likely be sleeping in Ewa's room; she apprehensively asks, "Are you sure? I'm taking over her bedroom and she already doesn't like me" (Wlodarczyk A15). Ewa certainly enjoys the power she has in adjuring the sleeping arrangements. She deftly coordinates everyone's respective location:

> They will be in my room. You will sleep in the chair. I'll take the sofa. On the other hand, the chair has a broken spring that will poke your back. If you want, you can have the sofa. Either way, you'll get a back ache. (Wlodarczyk A28)

Out of all of Ewa's action, her power over her family is best symbolized by this maneuvering.

25. Alcoholism and Denial

Marek's problem with drinking is symbolic of the crescendo of chaos in the family. Both Ewa and Marek have an excessive streak in their natures. As a conflicted family, they can never unite. Marek's intermittent alcoholism is acknowledged by his family but never truly confronted. When Wacek, Zofia and Marek are making a toast, Marek fatuously boasts, "I could drink the weight of both of you. The best moments in my life are the ones I don't remember" (Wlodarczyk A20). The dismal side of Marek's soporific binge drinking is illustrated in Wacek's monologue. Wacek explains, "He passed out—drunk—so many times. Sometimes I covered him with a blanket. Other times, I left him spread out like a corpse on the side walk. One time I left him and it rained and he got pneumonia" (Wlodarczyk A31). Ewa describes her experience with Marek's dissipated drinking. She justifiably complains, "Watching you drink away our future every name day…Watching you sit on the stoop with your useless friends and the

stray cats" (Wlodarczyk A30). Marek's reticent nature often lulls him into a torpid dream world, which prevents him from facing his critical problems.

26. Matriarchs

Peremptory matriarchs are the archetypal symbol of order in Ewa's family. Just as Ewa strictly governs her family, Ewa's mother in Poland sanctimoniously dominates her family. As she intently bosses around Zofia, Ewa ironically barks at Zofia, "My mother is so domineering. Zofia, don't use those cups" (Wlodarczyk A12).

When Marek describes Ewa's stout and despotic mother, he jokes, "She will outlast Armageddon. When the world has shattered into bits, she will be floating like a monolithic planet" (Wlodarczyk A29).

27. Ewa's Secondhand Couch and Apartment

Ewa's secondhand coach and other shabby possessions are symbolic of Ewa's working-class social status. Ewa lives as well as she can, but she is accustomed to having less than she desires. Indeed, her entire family has always had to patiently accept a low standard of living. Marek accurately observes, "It's probably a secondhand couch. Remember when we bought the desk from the dead man's house? We found all kinds of artifacts in the crevices" (Wlodarczyk A19).

28. The University and Wacek's Fledgling Independence

As mentioned before, Wacek has always eagerly tried to separate himself from his parents. His symbolic separation from his parents, both physically and psychologically was when he went to the University. Ewa and Marek have put much of their financial resources and psychological energy into educating Wacek and trying as best as they could to give him the proverbial "better life". The end result seems to be an angry son

who still resents his mother and father for their human failings. Wacek has a stubbornness that resembles Ewa's own intractability; his unwillingness to forgive only hurts everyone involved— especially himself. The final separation between himself and his parents seems to be when he publicly gave up religion. Ewa questions Marek about the spiritual guidance Wacek received and when he gave up the family faith. Marek answers, "Officially, it was in University, but unofficially, he left the church years ago" (Wlodarczyk A26).

29. Hotels

Hotels symbolize everything that Ewa's apartment is not: luxury and welcoming comfort. Whether Ewa's family stays in her apartment or a hotel depends on who controls the agitated situation. Ewa's hospitality begins with her tart warning:

> You people chose to come here. I will not spend your vacation apologizing... You can't stay here long. If my landlord knew, he'd raise my rent… Stay, but be quiet. You had to bring an extra person. (Wlodarczyk A13)

Ewa saves a particular warning for Marek. She dissuades him, "This will not be a vacation Marek. You'll have a much easier time staying at a hotel… I know a cheap place down the street" (Wlodarczyk 217). After Zofia has decided that she will have more power over her family if she keeps them near, Zofia rebels. Zofia desperately appeals to Wacek:

> Wacek, we can't stay. Let's leave now. We could get a hotel for a week or so… This is an emergency. Fine, we'll save our money go stay with the

> homeless people in a shelter. I hear they feed you soup and give you a blanket. Please, take me anywhere but here. (Wlodarczyk A21)

As Zofia's irritation builds, her anger comes to a physical boiling point. She refuses to get up from her suitcase and dreamily laments:

> I'm thinking about a mint on my pillow, fresh white towels and breakfast delivered by room service. Just like the resort we visited when we went skiing. That was perfect. Remember? (Wlodarczyk A28)

Zofia loses the battle, and Ewa begins dragging Zofia into her schemes.

30. The Afterlife

Ewa is not angry about dying and even uses the term "friendly ghost" as a recondite symbol for death and the afterlife. Ewa discusses her views of the afterlife in a relaxed moment with Marek. She mournfully states:

> What a wasted life…a few years to earnestly flail around and drown. To be done and fall on mercy may be a relief… To me, the end is a friendly ghost floating around, welcome as long as it goes quickly and takes me with it. (Wlodarczyk A24)

31. The Compass

The strongest symbol in *Diaspora* is that of a compass. Marek affirms his crusade:

> You are flesh and soul in my hands. If you and I—if we are not true, then I am a lie. You are my covenant. You are my compass, my north and south. Where can I go, where you will not haunt me? If you abandon me now, I will die before you, even if they bury you first. (Wlodarczyk A30)

It is an especially appropriate symbol, because so much of the action and dialogue is about travel, reunions, separations, and a sense of place or belonging. The question left at the end of the play is which direction— both physical and psychological— will the characters go? Will Wacek and Zofia survive in New York or will they return to Poland? Will Marek and Ewa's desires meet in confluence? Will Marek and Ewa finally being going in the same direction at the same time?

CHAPTER THREE

As a playwright, I wrote *Diaspora* in isolation. The process of sitting alone and organizing ideas on a blank screen evolved into the communal rite of reading, rehearsal, and performance (Bly 20). The objective of any play script, including *Diaspora*, ends in social submersion with the actors, audience, and critics. Bell writes:

> But theatre is so public— an act of community; the audience gathers, daring the playwright to entertain them or challenge them or make them laugh… the critics arrive too, pencils poised, looking for flaws, ready to pan, in a few column inches, several years of labour. (31)

Diaspora is a quarrelsome family "living room" drama including warring family members with varying positions in the same hierarchy, a group including different genders and ages. As the lights went up, The Beatle's "Long and Winding Road" directly related to Marek's onerous journey to reclaim Ewa. *Diaspora* is a realistic one-hour long script taking place in the living room of a small apartment in New York. The immediate environment of *Diaspora* is a claustrophobic setting of a physically constricted place in which the characters can not escape their oppressive quagmire.

The Lindenwood spring 2006 production of *Diaspora* was the premier of the script, which I completed in 2005. *Diaspora* is an extended and fully ripened one-act, lasting one hour. For the present age's attention span dominated by stand-up comedy and short plays and skits, *Diaspora* is relatively similar in spirit to the traditional full-length play that allows the audience to grow along with the story, absorbing nuances of character in the process. Claudel wrote of the full-length play:

> People know the play will be long, and prepare for it psychologically, as they would for a long journey. Too short a play would not give the enchantment time to work. Our resistance is not overcome. We are only half there, and we have left someone outside who calls impatiently to us the whole time. (138)

Although we live in a time in which one-act plays and even ten-minute plays are celebrated, Claudel makes a persuasive argument for comparatively longer works when he states:

> If we love an author, we do not want merely to indulge in him for a few minutes; we want to possess him. We want to adopt and adapt him, and to do this in all various facets of our temperament, judgment, and personality, we need time. (126)

The final version of the *Diaspora* script, which was approved by my advisor in December 2005, went up in the spring of 2006. I had been making notes and outlines on *Diaspora* for several years before I wrote the final script. In the years I was excogitating the *Diaspora* script, I called the play "Ewa's Play" in numerous notebooks until I completed the script as an independent study course in December 2005.

The plot of *Diaspora* is based on an *imagined* reunion of a family separated by mischance and family calamity, *Diaspora* is loosely inspired by real people and situations. While it is true that inception of the idea sprang from the life of an actual Polish woman named Ewa who lived in Staten Island, New York. I can not state emphatically enough that the story itself is fictional. The essential personality traits and fiery temperament are based on the woman named Ewa who prematurely passed away in New York, far away

from the family that revered and financially depended upon her. The fictitious specific situations and other fictional personalities are not based on any living person. The actual family of the living Ewa never visited her, but I *imagined* what a family reunion would be like for a woman who had essentially recreated herself in a new country.

The characters of Wacek, Zofia, and Marek are fictive. The characters that surround Ewa are designed to be composites that portray the realities of living dynamics of Poles, and many other countless transplants, in the numerous urban centers where they settle in the United States.

Ewa's survival while living a liberated life in New York and maintaining traditional connections in Poland, partially attached to both worlds, was a story in itself and begged the question: *how* does a person divide their identity and live incongruent, parallel and separate lives? After overstaying a tourist visa, she lived and worked for several decades without learning English. She lived in limbo, never having truly left her native culture and never completely assimilating into her adopted culture.

I wrote *Diaspora* as an outside observer, knowing that the challenge to direct a play about a culture and place other than my own would be a perpetual struggle to know what was not native to my worldview. I knew this endless road of discovery could never terminate with a conclusive and comprehensive understanding of the raw material of the script. Grenz elucidates the experience of artistically creating as a detached eyewitness. He writes:

> The way we think and act is thoroughly embedded in our temporal and cultural context… One can not go beyond one's own society's procedures of justification. Everything one can say about truth or rationality is

> embedded in the understanding and concepts unique to the society in which one lives. (156)

In writing *Diaspora*, I had to stretch my imagination because it is difficult to fully appreciate the intricacies of interpersonal relations given the profound influence of upbringing and cultural assumptions that shape them. Each person, whether they realize it or not, is vested in their own cultural values— even if they intend to approach writing and play production with an open mind. These values are at once an asset and hindrance to participating in the world of the play (Pavis 208-209). Pavis elaborates:

> Do we really understand our own culture? Are we not after all caught in the obviousness of the ideology that constitutes our culture and the rules that determine it? Are we not equally caught in the unconsciousness of the roots and origins of our own culture? And, conversely, do we not notice elements of a foreign culture that the 'natives' no longer notice? (208)

This is relevant to the *Diaspora* production, because it defines the play as an native outsider's interpretation of an immigrant's experience. It is the story of a Polish woman looking through an American lens.

Over the past five years, I have gradually gained new sometimes surprisingly novel insights into the nature of the characters' relationships in *Diaspora*. It became evident to me that my interpretations about interpersonal dynamics in *Diaspora* were subjective. These interpretations were based on my own evolving assumptions about the characters' individual belief systems, the meaning of their marital and familial relationships, as well as their attitudes towards institutional obligation and even mores. This realization led me to believe that a director, an external observer, can not fully grasp

the dynamics of the story at any given point. This is because of the myopic understanding a director inherits from their culture, what ever culture that might be. Culture shapes the observer's perceptions, no matter how well read or educated a viewer might be. Those perceptions evolve as the director becomes more familiar with the text and what is *in between* the text. Grenz illuminates this point:

> Because we stand in the world, we can never escape our historical context. But because we stand in different places in the world, we naturally develop different perspectives on the world and different interpretations of the world. (110)

I chose to write and direct an original play, rather than direct an existing play by another author for the following reasons: writing plays is a passion of mine and I have some experience directing plays by other authors at the university level. When given the opportunity to choose a thesis project that would truly fulfill me, it seemed appropriate to expand upon what I learned at Lindenwood University and write and direct what became an extended hour-long one-act play.

When I read and reread the *Diaspora* script again after five years, the passing time had given me a new perspective. It almost seemed like a different play to me than it was when I wrote and directed it. Instead of reading *Diaspora* as words I possessed, my perception of the script was more like that of an outside observer. Elam accurately describes my change in perspective:

> Time drives huge wedges between yesterday's version of our identities and today's, making it difficult to dialogue with our former selves and to construct a line of continuity between past and present. (193)

If I were to direct *Diaspora* today, after such a relatively short passing of time, it would also read differently to audiences. Fewer people today have vivid memories of the Soviet Union than in 2005 and might not remember the system under which Ewa and Marek worked and lived. A young American audience would consider Ewa and Marek simply working class and perhaps not grasp that many of their life choices were chosen for them. Today's audience may not understand the significance of the time when Ewa left Poland, 1990, which was as the existing system broke down. For those audience members without a historical background or concern for political events, the Cold War now seems like an outdated chimera from a James Bond movie. Even if someone were familiar with current Polish culture, their awareness would not inform them about Ewa and Marek's twentieth-century life experience. Poland itself has progressed economically and has fared well in European Union, becoming a place with a desirable passport. In essence, the emerging significance of *Diaspora* will continue to develop with society because the language of the play will register different meanings with future audiences. Elam fittingly states:

> Indeed, a language is in reality a complex of codes ranging from denotational correlation rules to dialectal, paralinguistic, rhetorical, pragmatic and contextual rules, all of which go to make up the rich network of constraints regulating utterances and their meanings. Theatrical performance will engage a vast range of correlation rules of this kind-in effect, virtually all the codes operative in society are potential factors in the theatre. (44-45)

Revisiting *Diaspora,* my own script, proves to me that a script's meaning is not static and my directing choices must always be informed by this constant evolution. I directed *Diaspora* in 2006 and the play takes place in 2005. *Diaspora*, with its cold war overtones, is already a historical play which reflects the past. Grenz expounds on this point:

> We can never escape from our own historical circumstances. Not even philosophers can claim to view history from a transcendental standpoint outside of history. Their understanding is necessarily limited… by the historical context in which they stand. (101)

In considering the audience, there are instinctive reasons they devote hours to sitting and listening to someone else's idea of life. Claudel writes:

> There are various elements in the pleasure felt by the audience at a play. There is the pleasure of logic, a plot constructed within the bounds of probability. In life, nothing happens strictly in order; on the whole we only see mutilated, abortive, imperfect actions... But a great poet, creating a fictitious plot, gives the heart the chance to act and express itself in full. (174)

Hopefully, the experience of watching the play lingers with the audience as a matter of principle, because how we live our lives matters. The two hours spent in the theatre seats should be more than a prelude to dinner and drinks. According to Hodge:

> Consequently, the play going experience does not stop with what is literally set out in these images from the stage, but continues in a very personal way in the minds and feelings of the viewers… this conversion is

> his work on the play and it is obvious that the process of play production can not be completed without him. (70)

This statement rang especially true when I read the reviews of audience members. After all, what a dramatist must do above all else is reach the audience. Knowing what the audience thinks placed me, the playwright, in "real world: where judgment is swift and positive, unmistakable and without appeal" (Mamet 122). I was enlightened by the written reactions of *Diaspora*'s audience members, undergraduate students who wrote one to two pages in response to the play.

It is remarkable how many different interpretations I received, especially regarding the meaning of the play. It was these audience interpretations that sealed the communication between the stage and the auditorium seat. Elam writes, "Usually ignored as a semiotic factor, it is with the spectator, in brief, that theatrical communication begins and ends" (87). This primal communication takes place between the characters on stage and the audience (Brestoff 3) and identification is necessary to the life of the play. Artaud writes:

> In order to reforge the chain, the chain of a rhythm in which the spectator used to see his own reality in the spectacle, the spectator must be allowed to identify himself with the spectacle, breath by breath and beat by beat. (140)

The meaning of a play should be able to be condensed in a basic idea, a sentence or two of description (Brestoff 3). One audience member interpreted the message of the play to be, "I think life is just too short to be taken for granted. If you love someone, go for it and fight for it, because when the fight is hard, in the end it will be worth the wait

and hardship". Another audience member stated, "The moral of this play is that time, money, and social position is not everything in someone's life. Family is everything. Family is love and compassion". Another wrote, "I learned that you should not turn away from people who care about you… Therefore, the moral of the story is that you should not lose contact with people who you care about." One audience member responded, "It is so tragic to see the family separated, the wife leaving, and the only motive for a reunion being a tragic event like death".

The most disparaging of all the interpretations were related to Ewa's role in *Diaspora*. One student wrote, "Ewa in the end lost both the respect of her man, who still loved her despite what she had done, and she was losing the son she never really had because if her selfishness in abandoning him". Another student astutely observed of Ewa:

> Ewa left her husband and son in Poland, and after fifteen years of separation. Her husband hears that Ewa is sick and about to die. Marek and Kasper decide to go after Ewa and reunite their family. Ewa does not want them to be there, but her biggest concern is that she does not want them to see her suffer.

Ewa's inflexible force of will came across to the audience. One audience member states:

> Ewa babies her son, but he is bitter after she chose to leave him for a new life. He does give in though as Ewa has a strong will and people are not always willing to cross her because she is tough and has a nasty temper… in the end it is just an acceptance that the family has for each other.

Regarding Ewa's reputation, one opinionated student was struck by the vicious lie Zofia and Wacek told her parents about Ewa to cover their shame of Ewa. The adamant student stated:

> It seems as though Ewa abandoned her family to start a new life in America and was a bit of a tramp. To cover for her, the family has told people back home that she died in some kind of accident. We also faintly learn that she is "terminal", which is probably why the family tolerates her now.

Overall, the evaluations showed the most sympathy for Marek. One audience member wrote, "He still loves and cares for his wife, even though she had become a whore. He just wants her back because she completes him". Another audience member, however, was critical of Marek, writing, "Marek says he has come to New York to take his wife back and protect her from illness, but he just wants to make up for all the drunken nights in Poland when he should have been taking care of his family".

Different audience members zoned in on specific judgments of the characters, especially Marek, who seemed to have universally won the audience's compassion. One student said sympathetically of Marek:

> Marek's decision to come back and be with his wife is a thoughtful one and shows that he has a lot of feeling for her. I have learned that if you are separated from those you love, they are still family and Marek believes in this.

Despite his lyric romanticism, Marek was not exempt from the audience's unrelenting and frank judgment. One male student noticed Marek's patriarchal treatment of independent Ewa:

> When Marek and his family arrive in New York you find out right away how life is for a Polish woman. Marek looks at Ewa as his property, more than an individual even though he loves her. Women, such as Ewa, are second as far as how things are done. The men come first and the only thing that matters is how the men feel and if their needs are met.

One female respondent had absolutely no compassion for Marek— a rare phenomenon in the typically sympathetic audience— stating bluntly, "In the end, I think the husband got what he deserved. A person can not be expected to be separated for fifteen years and then demand to have things to be the same." Despite this criticism of Marek, the audience usually commiserated with him. One student admired that "Marek was always protective of Wacek, his son, even when he was irritated with him." Another student succinctly stated, "Marek simply loved Ewa and, for him, this was enough for a lifetime."

The audience's feedback pertaining to Wacek was mixed but compassionate. One student wrote, "Wacek was abandoned by his mother and could never forget it. Nothing she said made him feel better. I don't think he will ever really forgive her and he shouldn't." The image of Wacek as the abandoned son universally garnered empathy from the audience, even though they did not always find his erratic temperament appealing. "Wacek was an angry guy, but it makes sense why he was so moody. His parents were a mess." The most favorable opinion of Wacek came from a student who wrote, "I liked Wacek and I didn't like him. At least he was trying to make his life a little

better. His parents never got anywhere, so he knew he had to try hard to get something for himself."

Zofia, in the part of the young romantic interest, had the advantage of youth and glamour, even though the audience did not consistently sympathize with her advantaged upbringing. One student wrote, "Even though she was kind of spoiled, she didn't deserve how rude Ewa was to her. I don't think I could stand a mother-in-law like that." Not all students minded Zofia's high expectations. Female students were the most sympathetic, perhaps because Zofia was closest to them in age and experience. One benevolent audience member wrote:

> I can see why Zofia was so unhappy. She just gets married and all of her choices are made for her by Ewa, who doesn't like her. Wacek usually just sits there and lets his mother do what she wants. I would want out of there.

What was interesting about the written reactions to the play was how the audience noticed and integrated *all* of the physical details of the play. For example, the warm amber lights slowly went up before play, as gradual as a sunrise. All of the objects, the set, and how they relate to one another are innately part of the drama. Claudel clarifies:

> The audience sees the action beforehand in its lines and planes, its architecture and its colors… the set depends on the actions about to be carried out in it, and to which it offers possibilities… Sets do not play a purely occasional part. *They don't simply happen.* The action should appear to create them, and they in their turn give it coherence and support. (141)

One audience member observed, "Some positives in the play include the lighting in the beginning, which reflected the lighting in the ending. Other positive were the accents. The set was nice and authentic". Another audience member noted the carefully selected music, such as Cat Stevens' "Wild World". One responder wrote:

> The next time you sit down and listen to that song, really listen to it. If that song did not come on after the play was over, the play would not make as much sense to me as it does now. For that family, it really was a "Wild World".

The audience also responded positively to the actors' performance, which is the soul of any play. Claudel writes, "The soul itself is the instrument, and oh, the joy when, sometimes in infinite complication, the note is *right. Right*— and what beauty in that one word" (167). One student wrote:

> I thought the play was wonderful. It brought laughter to the entire audience. The actors and actresses did a wonderful job. Their many facial expressions, the variety of gestures, and speech were right on target.

In terms of acting, one student chose Marek as the most empathic and well-acted, stating:

> I felt that the drunken father, Marek, was the most convincing and poignant of the characters in keeping me interested— and I don't usually go to plays. I was always wondering what he might do or say next. Marek's facial expression and the funny way he expressed his frustrations even when he wasn't talking was also a great bit of comic relief.

Based on audience reaction, the characters of *Diaspora* are plotted on a gradual continuum ranging from antipathy to sympathy. Marek ranked highest in sympathy,

although he was judged for his alcoholism and long delay in visiting Ewa.

The next favorite in audience reaction was Wacek and then Zofia. This might have been because the mostly undergraduate audience were closest in age to these characters could relate to their struggles with family and life decisions. Zofia, in particular, gained sympathy for the insults she endured from Ewa on stage.

Ewa, in general faced the harshest criticism from the audience, but they also expressed admiration and even respect for her determination to improve the life of her family and herself. Despite her libertine proclivities, many audience members saw her as responsible because she financially took care of her family.

Analyzing these uninhibited assessments of the audience was critical to my understanding of my work as a director. Audience reactions must be considered for a complete and total view of both the play script alone and the final production (Mamet 124). Mamet's maverick statement is partially true:

> The observant merchant— the dramatist— may learn from the only school where he can learn: in the back of the house, watching the paying audience watch his play. That is the only venue that can cure him of any unfortunate good ideas about the purpose of theatre. (125)

My directing choices were informed by Brecht and Mamet, but if they had been contemporaries, Brecht would have likely disagreed with Mamet's almost free-market style approach to pleasing the audience. I chose to take the best from both.

Had Artaud, another inspiration of mine, and Mamet been cohorts, they might have agreed. Artaud writes of the joy of theatre:

> If we have come to attribute to art nothing more than the values of pleasure and relaxation and constrain it to a purely formal use of forms within the harmony of certain external relations, that in no way spoils its profound expressive value. (69)

When considering the feedback from the audience, I had to take into consideration Brecht's views. Although Brecht maintained the worth of entertainment in theatre, he thought leaning purely on audience reaction could "lead purely to the formalistic criteria" (112). While the joy of theatre lives on in his works, Brecht did not compromise in writing and producing what *he* saw as theatrical truth. He writes:

> The modern playwright's (or scene designer's) relations with his audience are far more complicated than a tradesman's with his customers. But even a customer isn't always right; he by no means represents a final unalterable phenomenon that has been fully explored. Certain habits and

> appetites can be induced in him artificially; sometimes it is just a matter of establishing their presence. (159)

My intent as a director was to produce the best possible *Diaspora* production possible. My path to getting there was following the philosophy of the liberal directing philosophy. The reactions of the audience members helped me to see if my intended communication was a success, and I was edified by their responses. Taking the best for Artaud, Brecht, and Brook, while combining my own vision resulted in a *Diaspora* production I am proud to call my own.

Regarding my interpretation of *Diaspora* and directing choices, *Diaspora* was a thesis project with strict guidelines, which I followed. The script was also comparatively traditional. Hodge writes, "All good plays appear to be well-ordered" (47). My advisor described *Diaspora* as a "well-made" play in the nineteenth-century tradition, complete with a letter arriving with pertinent information. Based on the guidance I received and the nature of the script, I directed *Diaspora* in what Benedetti calls a "liberal" position, meaning:

> The liberal point of view holds that the value of a play lies in the way it lives relative to the present moment, and that a successful production results when the essential spirit of the play, transmitted by but not entirely bound to the text. (Benedetti 14)

Because I felt that experimentation was an important part of my education as a graduate student, I tried to experiment within the parameters of the thesis project guidelines. I used supplementary activities to keep the excitement of testing new boundaries. This spirit manifested itself in the various warm-up exercises. Since the

language of physicality is as important as written language, I endeavored to improve physical communication between my actors. Regarding physical communication, Elam states:

> If language is to register within the physical context of the stage and come into contact with bodies and objects thereon, it must participate in the deictic ostension of which gesture is the prime vehicle. (65)

One of the most effective activities to transmute feeling into action was using kickboxing gloves in warm-up. After their lines were memorized, two actors put on the gloves. Ground rules were set, such as only hitting in areas that would not harm the other actor and the action was similar to stage fighting. What mattered was the appearance of the hit, not the actual force. The actors delivered their lines while boxing in the mood of the line. For example, if the lines were flirtatious, the actors hit with a light jab. If the line was angry, the actors' used assertive energy. This was a great way to physically open up and make the actors comfortable behaving like an arguing family. As a cast, we also worked with yoga and relaxation techniques, such as breathing exercises to allow the actors to relax and focus. I did all I could to enable the actors to concentrate and create, because I adamantly view rehearsal as sanctuary in which external concerns are left at the door (Director's Notes).

Another important aspect of production in *Diaspora* was articulation. An exercise I frequently used with actors was to have them over enunciate their lines, because actors may relax their speech over time. They become accustomed to the show and the routine and relax their diction. Every once in a while, we practiced a scene with exaggerated diction, which helped the actors analyze *how* they were speaking (Hodge 163-181).

In directing *Diaspora*, I often referred to Hodge's advice and activities. One example was when, as a cast, we discussed the question, "What is the difference between hand properties and set properties?" as posed by Hodge (131).

> MAREK. A woman's kitchen tells you more about her than her lingerie. What secrets are in cupboard? What does she reveal and what does she hide? (MAREK admires an expensive chess set.) Look at the chess set. Do you think she bought it?
>
> WACEK. That's usually how people acquire things.
>
> MAREK. Not everyone. (Wlodarczyk 221)

Another example of how an object was both a hand property and a set property is the food. The family help themselves to Ewa's food as a kind of ownership of the space.

> ZOFIA. Your mother knows how to shop. There's everything from back home.
>
> WACEK. Let's start with dessert. Bring some torte.
>
> (She brings the torte and coffee to Wacek and Marek.)
>
> ZOFIA. How long will she be gone?
>
> WACEK. Who knows?
>
> ZOFIA. Just dessert? I'm hungry for something else.
>
> MAREK. Take what you like. Ewa's kitchen has always been generous.
>
> WACEK. Bring the sausages too. (Wlodarczyk A17)

Hodge calls costumes "scenery on the move" (259), stating:

> Because costume is worn by the moving actor, it is a more intensive and continuous conveyer of mood that either set or lighting. Our feelings as

> members of the audience are definitely aroused by costume, even though we are not conscious of how the effect is made, as we should not be. (261)

The topic of clothes and appearance are prominent in the *Diaspora* script. Judging by dialogue, sartorial concerns matter to the characters in *Diaspora.* To start with, Ewa is corrected for the way she dresses at church. While on the phone Ewa declares:

> There must be a misunderstanding. I dress the way any good looking woman in this city dresses. Lots of other women in church wear the exact same dress… Maybe it does look different on me. I'm not trying to distract anyone…Maybe some people are easily distracted…
>
> (Wlodarczyk 215)

Marek's brand new suit takes on an importance beyond practicality. He deeply wants to impress Ewa, but she does not notice his suit.

> MAREK. (The doorbell rings. She opens the door to see MAREK. She closes the door on him. The doorbell rings again. She opens the door. MAREK wears an uncomfortably new suit. The starched collar and new tie seem to wear him, especially while he stands in the coldness of EWA'S exacting scrutiny.)
>
> Have you forgotten your manners, living in Babylon so long? May I at least step in and warm up? The weather is vicious. (MAREK resolutely sets a new suitcase down and waits for EWA'S response. She stands to block his entry.)
>
> EWA. You should have a warmer coat. (MAREK had been hoping to impress her. Her comments disappoint him.) (Wlodarczyk A8)

Later in the play Wacek mocks Marek's suit, calling it a "straightjacket" (Wlodarczyk 226). When Zofia appears in her new evening outfit and Wacek insults Marek, he becomes demoralized.

> MAREK. Why shouldn't you have nice things? No point in new clothes when the body is too old to honor them. New wine in old skins…
>
> (MAREK tears at his tie, throwing it over a chair.)
>
> ZOFIA. (Comforting MAREK.) It's a fine suit. A quality suit is an investment.
>
> MAREK. A suit *is* an investment.
>
> ZOFIA. Absolutely.
>
> MAREK. (He is suddenly full of ceremonial inspiration. He regains the bearing of a gentleman.) All a man needs in life is a well-cut suit and a well-built woman. (Wlodarczyk A19-A20)

The essence of the costume and property discussions and exercises we had as a cast during *Diaspora* rehearsals were about the above lines and what the character's possessions and environment meant. For example, the moment Marek begins to believe that his suit is an object of derision, he experiences emotional defeat. When Zofia appears in the new outfit, she feels victorious in being admired by Wacek. The point of the exercises was that what people wear, hold, touch or buy reveals who they are and what they value (Hodge 259).

I essentially honored the *Diaspora* script. If I made any adjustments to the script, it was in the interest of generating a cohesive production. Since I was the author of *Diaspora*, this did not violate any established precept. One example is that I added a

monologue at the end of the play for Wacek after we began rehearsals. This was a logical change approved by my advisor. Wacek's monologue made sense for several reasons. Firstly, Marek has a monologue of similar length and content at the beginning of *Diaspora*, so the structure already existed. Ending the play with a monologue created architectural symmetry. Secondly, Wacek's monologue ends the play with the questions about the future. It is fitting that Marek had the monologue in the beginning of *Diaspora* because he is on his mission to reunite with Ewa. Since he accomplishes a reunion with Ewa— albeit a nebulous one— Wacek moves the story forward with his own thoughts on his own prospects.

In looking back at *Diaspora*, I can not help but look to the future and how my experience directing *Diaspora* will impact future decisions. Although I have had inspirations from exceptional directors, the principal factor in my potential directing decisions is how I employ those various lessons. For example, if I had the opportunity to direct *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I would be informed but not limited by my knowledge of past productions, such as Brook's stark and charming production. I would be remiss to resurrect someone else's production, no mater how brilliant.

My interpretation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* would take place in the crime-riddled alley of a major urban city, populated by homeless people. In their dream state, they would experience the delusions of the surreal night. The jumble of the urban clutter resembles the twisting and confusing forest of Shakespeare's original context. The magical flower that causes the spell of love might be perceived to be a street drug. The changes in appearance would be accomplished with the rubble that creates their costumes. For example, perhaps the wings of the fairies are made of cardboard boxes left on the

street. Since every community has its hierarchy, the characters would be portrayed according to their prominence in their group of dispossessed people. For example, Titania might be the most street-wise prima donna of the group. Characters such as Hermia and Lysander could be portrayed as run-away teenagers. The light would dawn on the alley and the chaos of the night before is just a dream.

My *hypothetical* interpretation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* would respect the meaning Shakespeare's text. Mainly, it would cogently communicate the meaning of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* while making the story current in the sense that every person has stories they tell themselves, dreams they imagine, and sometimes delusions that mislead them. On reaching people with the images of their time, Brecht writes:

> In establishing the extent to which we can satisfy by representations from so many different periods— something that can hardly have been possible to children of those vigorous periods themselves— are we not at the same time creating the suspicion that we have failed to discover the special pleasures, the proper entertainment of our own time? (182)

The urban jungle is the right setting for a thought-provoking production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and truly fulfills the resourceful role of the liberal director. Benedetti writes:

> The director then, is a communicator of the highest order. This function is his job,his reason for being… the transfer of his ideas must be made through the minds and feelings of others, the challenge for a director lies in his talent for touching the magic springs of others with what he so vividly imagines and feels himself. (3)

Regarding the director's search for the new, Artaud challenges the director to listen to the urgent truth of the present. He radically states:

> We must get rid of our superstition of *texts* and *written* poetry. Written poetry is worth reading once, and then should be destroyed… Then we might come to see that it is our veneration for what has already been created, however beautiful and valid it may be, that petrifies us, that deadens our responses… beneath the poetry of texts if the actual poetry, without form and without texts. (78)

Certainly, literally destroying once read or performed text is unrealistic, but the spirit of his directive is worth remembering.

As directors, wherever we reside on the spectrum of philosophies, we must never settle for what once worked. Directing informed only by past productions and reviving lifeless directing philosophies is akin to spending one's life looking through photo albums of past events. A liberal director must read and direct with personal convictions, setting the text on fire with the illumination of the individual director's mind. My goal as a director is to continually test myself and contribute to theatre's body of work. In the apt words of Tennyson,

> How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
> To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!...
> 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
> Push off, and sitting well in order smite
> The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds

To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths

Of all the western stars, until I die. (21-22, 51-55)

Theatre *is* seeking a new world with every show. It is never too late to "seek a newer world".

WORKS CITED

Albee, Edward. *Stretching My Mind.* New York: Carroll & Graf, 2005. Print.

Anonymous. Music View: It's Peter Brook's 'Carmen,' not Bizet's or Merimee's. New York Times. *New York Times.* 20 November, 1983. Print.

Antoine, André: "Causerie sur la Mise en Scène," *La Revue de Paris*, Vol. X, April 1, 1903, 596-612. *Directors on Directing: A Source Book of the Modern Theater.* Eds. Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy. Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963. Print.

Barnes, Clive. "Peter Brook's a Midsummer Night's Dream". *New York Times.* 21 January, 1971. Print.

Bell, Karen. "Workshopping". *Performing Art and Entertainment in Canada.* Toronto: Spring 1995. Vol. 29, Iss. 2, pp. 31-34. Print.

Bentley, Eric. *The Theatre of Commitment.* New York: Athenium, 1967. Print.

Bly, Mark. "Pressing an Ear against a Hive or New Play Explorations in the Twenty-First Century". *Theatre Topics*. Baltimore: March 2003. Vol. 13, Iss. 1; pp. 19-24. Print.

Bogart, Anne. *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*. London, Routledge, 2001. Print.

Booker, Christopher. *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories.* New York, New York: Continuum, 2004. Print.

Breech, Bertolt. *Breech on Breech.* Trans. John Willett. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1964. Print.

Brestoff, Richard. *Acting Under the Circumstances: Variations on a Theme of Stanislavski.* Lyme, New Hampshire: Smith and Kraus, 1999. Print.

Brook, Peter. *The Shifting Point.* New York: Harper & Row, 1987. Print.

Claudel, Paul. *Claudel on the Theatre.* Miami, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1966. Print.

Copeau, Jacques: "La Mise en Scène." Encyclopédie Française, December 1935. *Directors on Directing: A Source Book of the Modern Theater.* Eds. Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963. Print.

Croyden, Margaret. *Conversations with Peter Brook.* New York: Faber and Faber, 2003. Print.

Eversley, Shelley and Jennifer L. Morgan. "Introduction: the Sexual Body." *Women's Studies Quarterly.* Vol. 35. Issue 1/2 (2007): p. 10-19. Print.

Fiddick, Peter. "Archive Theatre Review: Midsummer's Night Dream". *The Gaurdian.* 28 August, 1970. Print.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *History of European Drama and Theatre.* Trans. Jo Riley. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Gaggi, Silvio. *Modern/Postmodern: a Study in Twentieth-Century Arts and Ideas.* Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Press, 1989. Print.

Grenz, Stanley J.. *A Primer on Postmodernism.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Ferdmans, 1996. Print.

Hodge, Francis. *Play Directing: Analysis, Communication, and Style.* Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Allen and Bacon, 1994. Print.

Ibbotson, Piers and Lotte Darso. "Directing Creativity: The Art and Craft of Creative Leadership". The Journal of Management and Organization. Vol. 14 (2008). Iss. 5: pp. 548-556)

Ibsen, Henrik. *An Enemy of the People*. Trans. R. Farquharson Sharp. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2446/2446-h/2446-h.htm>.

Johnson, Merri Lisa. "Gangster Feminism: The Feminist Cultural Work of HBO's 'The Sopranos'". *Feminist Studies.* Summer 2007, Vol. 33. Iss. 2, pp. 269-296.

Jones, Edward Trostle. *Following Directions: A Study of Peter Brook.* New York: Peter Lang, 1985. Print.

Jouvet, Louis. "The Profession of the Producer, II." *Theatre Arts Monthly*, Vol. XXI. January 1937, 57-64. *Directors on Directing: A Source Book of the Modern Theater.* Eds. Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963. Print.

Mamet, David. *Theatre.* New York: Faber and Faber, 2010. Print.

Marowitz, Charles. *Directing the Action.* New York: Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 1986. Print.

Mitchell, Rick. "Simple Pleasures: the Ten-minute Play, Overnight Theatre, and the Art of Storytelling". New Theatre Quarterly. Cambridge, February 2003. Vol. 173, pp. 67-81. Print.

McCabe, Terry. *Misdirecting the Play: An Argument Against Contemporary Theatre.* Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001. Print.

Nathan, George Jean. *Theatre of the Moment.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1936. Print.

Nathan, George Jean. *The Magic Mirror: Selected Writings on Theatre*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960. Print.

Nicolescu, Basarab. "Peter Brook and Traditional Thought". Trans. David Williams. Gurdjieff International Review. http://www.gurdjieff.org/nicolescu.htm.

Les Voies de la Création Théâtrale, Vol. XIII (CNRS Editions, Paris, 1985, edited by Georges Banu). The second half (starting with the section titled "Theatre, Determinism and Spontaneity") was first published in English in *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Vol. VII, pp. 11–23, Copyright © 1997 OPA (Overseas Publishers Association), N.V. Print.

Redgrave, Michael. *Mask or Face: Reflections in an Actor's Mirror.* London: Heinemann, 1959. Print.

Schonberg, Harold C. "Peter Brook's 'Carmen' Stirs Lively Debate". *New York Times.* 27 November, 1983. Print.

Rich, Frank. "Theater: Peter Brook's 'Tragedie de Carmen'". *New York Times*. 18 November, 1983. Print.

Richards, Thomas. *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*. London: Routledge, 1995. Print.

Shank, Theodore. *The Art of the Dramatic Art.* New York: Delta, 1969. Print.

Simon, Mayo. *The Audience and the Playwright.* New York: Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 2003. Print.

Strindberg, August. *Plays by August Strindberg, Second Series.* Trans. Edwin Bjorkman. <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/14347/pg14347.html>.

Thomas, James. *Script Analysis.* Oxford: Focal press, 2009. Print.

Diaspora

A Play in One Act

Mary Elizabeth Wlodarczyk
"M. E. Wlodarczyk"

CHARACTERS

MAREK, Ewa's husband, is a former factory worker in his fifties. He is thin and neatly groomed with a calm countenance. He moves with slow, purposeful determination. He has not seen his wife for fifteen years and he has come from his small, economically depressed village to claim her after hearing that she is seriously ill.

EWA is a maid also in her fifties. Her eyes flicker and scrutinize her surroundings, like a cat calculating whether to pounce or nap. She is lacquered and groomed in the precise way that was en vogue when she was a young beauty. She has recently found out that she is terminally ill, but does not want to spend the end of her life in contrived and guilt-ridden reunions. The precise nature of her illness is never revealed. Ewa immigrated from Poland years ago and has built her own life in New York. Though she sends money home to Poland and remains in contact with her family, her emancipated life in New York is entirely her own.

WACEK is the educated son of Ewa and Marek. He was ten years old when Ewa left Poland and is now a man of twenty-five. He has consciously become opposite of his parents by marrying out of his class and giving up Catholicism.

ZOFIA, also twenty-five and educated, is Wacek's new bride. Born into a family of judges, she accustomed to more comfort and security than Ewa's New York life offers.

KASPER is one of Ewa's sometimes lovers. He is an anchor for Ewa, but takes more than he offers.

SETTING

A low-rent attic apartment in Staten Island.

TIME

A bitter winter evening in January 2005.

(Lights go up on MAREK standing on an icy street. WACEK and ZOFIA have left him with a disproportional amount of luggage to carry.)

MAREK

(MAREK punctuates his speech by muttering Polish profanities.)

You kids go ahead. I'll pay for the taxi. Fifty dollars. I didn't ask for a tour of New York. You could have told me you charged for directions before I…Take it, take it, take it…I'm never taking a taxi again. When I have Ewa back to Poland, we'll walk the entire way. Look at my shoes. They are scuffed. Ewa hates shoddy shoes. I should have polished them at the airport, but everything costs so much here. You have to be a king to live comfortably in this city. I don't know what I expected…I expected more. I expected this city to look more like on television. This is nothing like MTV…trash on the sidewalk just like Poland, the people look just as miserable as they do back home. They only person who approached me with a smile, was the man who took my wallet. He said, "Hey buddy, give me your wallet." I gave him my wallet, no problem. Just like home, everybody's out to screw you. He doesn't know I keep my money and documents in my underwear. The only thing in my wallet is a Soviet condom from 1989, which tells you how interesting my life has been since Ewa left me to make a living *here*…
This isn't so much better than home, maybe a little better, but not that much better…I will make her see that I can fix everything. I have my troubles, but my Ewa has it worse. Frankly, she is an unlucky woman, a magnet for black cats and the evil eye. She works hard, but nothing she wants is ever in the cards for her. I try to tell her, you can't have everything you want. You're lucky if you can avoid what you don't want, but she pushes and pushes…Pushing on a locked door doesn't open it, it is better to go through the window, but she pushes and pushes. I used to hate her for leaving me, but I am an empty soul without her. I try to forget her, but she is woven into the fiber of my skin…she is the marrow in my bones and the sinew in my muscles. Whatever is shattered, I will put together again. I don't care what doctor's say. Doctor's only cut you and poison you. The last doctor I saw pulled the wrong tooth. The rotten tooth is still there and it aches like hell. I know the doctors are wrong about Ewa. She will live, live to be a wise old woman—with me. We will sit on the porch together and watch the centuries pass, forever and ever. She will come home and live with me again and it will be as if we're young and beautiful and whole. She will bring me breakfast and I will bring her wild flowers from the woods. There are no wild flowers here, only flowers wrapped in plastic and sealed in a box like a tomb. I will take Ewa back to where wild flowers grow and I will mend her.

(Lights out on MAREK. Lights up on a modest New York apartment, neatly decorated with shabby furniture and a couple of bouquets of flowers. Shoes are lined up by the door. A crucifix hangs on the wall. EWA wears an exquisite, expensive oriental robe, which is a gift from a past lover. She is perfectly made-up and coifed. KASPER is mostly dressed, with his shirt untucked. His jacket is strewn across a chair. He nimbly reclines, owning the room as if it is his own.)

EWA

I don't mean to rush you, but…

(KASPER drinks his coffee.)

Actually, I do mean to rush you.

KASPER

Now that you're done with me, I'm discarded?

EWA

Yes. I have an alter guild meeting at church.

KASPER

When are you going to leave your husband?

EWA

When are you going to leave your wife? Never mind, you're not marriage material.

KASPER

I'm abused. Look at that face. You are a wicked angel.

EWA

Put on your glasses. There's a reason bedrooms are dark.

KASPER

I mean it. Poetry is in your face. A face like this can't be designed with a knife. Although you could –

(He pulls at the corner of her eyes.)

EWA

Bastard. If you weren't rich-

KASPER

I don't have a cent.

EWA

I know, Darling. Neither do I.

KASPER

I'm embarrassed to ask you, but my rent is three weeks late.

EWA

I can't afford your rent and mine. I work hard for my money.

KASPER

So do I— I will pay you back. This is temporary.

EWA

Do you have any other temporary person who can help?

KASPER

It isn't help. It is a loan. I'm not some kind of-

EWA

How much?

KASPER

Five hundred.

EWA

(She takes the cash from a coffee can.)

That's all I can spare. When will I see my money again?

KASPER

As soon as some deals I'm working on come through for me, I *will* pay you back. You inspire me.

EWA

I enable you.

KASPER

Stop watching Dr. Phil. Psychology is terribly for your peace of mind.

EWA

Would you mind getting my mail on your way out?

(He grabs the mail from outside the door.)

Thanks.

(She takes the mail from him.)

KASPER

See, I'm already paying you back.

EWA

Goodbye—

KASPER

Until tomorrow.

EWA

Maybe. I might be busy.

(KASPER exits. EWA sits down with the mail, finding the envelope.)

Finally.

(KASPER bursts through the door.)

Go away, I'm broke.

KASPER

I forgot my jacket.

EWA

That parasite lawyer finally fixed my immigration papers.

(KASPER sits down to look at her letter.)

KASPER

A citizen—

EWA

A resident of sorts, a legal resident—

KASPER

How much did this cost?

EWA

—None of your business. Now I have to pay taxes.

KASPER

I never have. When I had my shop, I paid most of my taxes most of the time.

EWA

—Until you went bankrupt from the I.R.S.. Do you still owe them?

KASPER

Just keep working for cash. We'll celebrate tonight. Should we have dinner in or out?

EWA

No thanks. Who's buying?

KASPER

Don't I always? Let's go somewhere expensive. I might have to borrow money from my other girlfriends.

EWA

I can't go.

KASPER

I'm kidding. All of my other girlfriends are broke.

EWA

I was going to wait until tonight to tell you, but you hardly ever spring for dinner and when you finally do, you get dumped. You'll never buy dinner for another woman again.

KASPER

Dumped? I'm sorry about the—

EWA

No, it isn't that.

KASPER

Take back the money. I'll find another way to pay the rent.

EWA

Forget it. Keep it as a final gift. Your gift to me can be leaving graciously. There isn't any future, any reason for us to be to—

KASPER

You expect us to marry?

EWA

God no—

KASPER

—Because you're taken, but if you want marriage—

EWA

I can't afford to marry you—

KASPER

It is true I never paid you back, but—

EWA

I don't ever want to marry you. Ever. No offense, but never.

KASPER

Is it because you're sick? If you want to die pure and repentant, you have a lot of catching up to do.

EWA

It isn't because I'm…terminal. You and I are not—

KASPER

—terminal.

EWA

Right.

KASPER

If we're breaking up, by definition, that makes us terminal.

EWA

Don't you know how this goes? I tell you that I need to move on, that there's no future, etc., etc.?, You pretend to be disappointed, maybe we cry, etc., etc.,? Have you ever been left by a woman?

KASPER

No.

EWA

How does it feel?

KASPER

I thought I'd leave you first, but when you got sick…

EWA

Nice try.

KASPER

I was going to dump you.

EWA

Right.

KASPER

I've been done with you since—

EWA

Sure. You can tell everybody that you left me. I'll confirm your story. You can say that I begged and that I…threw myself at your feet. No, that isn't realistic. Say that I drank out of despair. Make up your own story, just leave.

KASPER

Why?

EWA

Does it matter?

KASPER

Yes.

EWA

I want to clear my head while I can. I want to face myself without distraction.

KASPER

Pop psychology ruins all of my relationships. Everyone wants a soul mate. I'm good for you and you're good for me.

EWA

Maybe.

KASPER

Everyone needs a vice.

EWA

I have plenty of vices. Give me back the key.

KASPER

You never gave me a key. Is there someone else?

EWA

No. Maybe there is someone. I remember giving you my only spare key.

(KASPER gives her the key.)

KASPER

Here.

EWA

Thank you.

KASPER

Thank you.

(He leans closer to her to kiss her, she rejects him. He walks out.)

I was going to leave first.

EWA

(EWA puts down a kettle of tea. The phone rings.)

Hello Father Fiatkowski How are you?... I'm sorry to hear that... Actually, I was going to be there this evening, but you know that. Someone from the alter guild goes every Friday night... There must be a misunderstanding. I dress the way any good looking woman in this city dresses. Lots of other women in church wear the exact same dress... Maybe it does look different on me. I'm not trying to distract anyone...Maybe some people are easily distracted...I was not forcing myself on the new priest. No...

(The kettle screams. She forgets to turn off the stove.)

Yes, I did I say that...Maybe it just sounded like that...I didn't mean that...If he thinks that was a sexual overture, as you call it, he's socially inept...You can't fire me, I'm a volunteer.

(She hangs up the phone and sees the potholder smoldering near the burner. She turns off the stove and puts out the smoldering potholder.)

(The doorbell rings. She opens the door to see MAREK. She closes the door on him. The doorbell rings again. She opens the door. MAREK wears an uncomfortably new suit. The starched collar and new tie seem to wear him, especially while he stands in the coldness of EWA'S exacting scrutiny.)

MAREK

Have you forgotten your manners, living in Babylon so long? May I at least step in and warm up? The weather is vicious.

(MAREK resolutely sets a new suitcase down and waits for EWA'S response. She stands to block his entry.)

EWA

You should have a warmer coat.

(MAREK had been hoping to impress her. Her comments disappoint him.)

MAREK

I promised. Here I am.

EWA

There you are.

MAREK

Better now than never. May I come in? I think I do have a right. Remember, some years ago there was a wedding, we lived in a house and so on. For me to enter, you need to remove yourself the doorway.

EWA

Of course, I don't know whether to beat you or invite you in for coffee—I'm more inclined to the former.

MAREK

Let's settle my fate inside.

(EWA steps aside. MAREK leans forward to kiss her. She evades him.)

EWA

I definitely set my mind on the beating. Why are you here? Wacek. Is Wacek alright?

MAREK

Fine. He's fine.

EWA

It's my mother. Is she sick…dead?

MAREK

No such luck, she's still running the village.

EWA

You won the lottery.

(MAREK shakes his head.)

Then what?

(The doorbell rings. When EWA realizes KASPER has returned, she barely opens the door enough to reveal to the audience, but not MAREK, that KASPER stands with a gift. EWA convinces KASPER to leave.)

MAREK

Company?

EWA

Mailman.

MAREK

You always whisper to the mailman?

EWA

No, I—

MAREK

He didn't give you anything. He came to tell you that you don't have mail. What's on your coffee table? Looks like mail.

EWA

If you came to interrogate me, my life hasn't been your business for some time.

MAREK

What about you is my business? If your life isn't my business, maybe your death is. I have to hear through your mother that you're sick.

EWA

She loves to be the first to know.

MAREK

Spend some time with your son, if you recognize him after all this time.

EWA

You brought Wacek?

MAREK

—and his new wife.

EWA

He marries and doesn't tell me? Who is she?

(ZOFIA enters.)

MAREK

Ewa, this is Zofia. Zofia, dear, this is your…this is…

ZOFIA

Hello. I've heard so much about you.

EWA

That's curious. She knows all about me and she magically appears from nowhere.

MAREK

Ewa. She was just greeting you.

EWA

Excuse me, Dear. I haven't heard a murmur about you. You're tall for my son, aren't you?

ZOFIA

He doesn't think so. I'll get the luggage.

EWA

Stay with me. Let the men do the heavy lifting. Let's get to know each other. What do you do?

ZOFIA

For a living?

EWA

What else would I mean?

ZOFIA

I was a student when I met Wacek.

EWA

And now?

ZOFIA

Now I'm with Wacek, here in New York.

EWA

I can see you're a literal person. What do you do in life?

ZOFIA

My degree was in engineering. And what do you do? Wait, Wacek told me all about you. You're a maid?

EWA

Yes. Maybe you should help Wacek with the luggage.

(ZOFIA exits.)

EWA

This will not be a vacation Marek. You'll have a much easier time staying at a hotel.

MAREK

I love it here.

EWA

I know a cheap place down the street.

MAREK

This is perfect. I have been dreaming about your apartment for years. I thought would be like a television show.

EWA

Only television looks like television. This is best I can do.

MAREK

It's just right. Now let's calm down and not ruin this for Wacek. I promise you can claw my eyes out when they're asleep.

(WACEK enters with the luggage. ZOFIA follows.)

EWA

Darling, you look wonderful. So grown up.

WACEK

That's usually how it goes. No way to get around it.

EWA

Sit down. Zofia, get us something to drink. There is coffee over there.

WACEK

No Zofia, stay. Mother, let her rest.

EWA

It's no trouble for her.

WACEK

Zofia, sit with me. Mother—

EWA

Over there. Please dear, I want to talk to my son. You're too thin. Is she feeding you? Can she cook?

WACEK

We were going to tell you. It just happened so fast.

EWA

Is she pregnant?

WACEK

No, we just knew. When you know you know and we knew.

EWA

Do you at least have pictures of the wedding? This coffee isn't going to pour itself. I'll do it.

WACEK

Sure, just the civil ceremony. We didn't marry in the church.

EWA

No church wedding? Did the priest disapprove of the union?

WACEK

Nonsense. I don't believe in that business Mom.

EWA

(EWA spills coffee on ZOFIA.)

I'm so clumsy.

ZOFIA

I'll do it.

(ZOFIA serves the coffee.)

EWA

What do you mean you don't believe? Last time I saw you, you were going to mass with Grandma every day.

WACEK

I was ten. I didn't have a choice. Where grandma goes, we all must follow.

(MAREK nods in agreement.)

EWA

My mother is so domineering. Zofia, don't use those cups. My son deserves more than common dinner china. Look on the bottom shelf.

(ZOFIA puts mismatched cups and saucers on the table. She looks for matching cups.)

WACEK

Look, think of me as a humanist or realist. I always have been. What difference does a sacrament make if you don't believe in it?

EWA

This wouldn't happen if I'd been around. You probably won't even baptize your children.

WACEK

If you want to baptize them, go ahead. I don't care.

EWA

You are expecting.

WACEK

No, I meant hypothetically. When we have these hypothetical children you can immerse or sprinkle them or whatever voodoo you like.

EWA

Zofia, are you growing coffee beans?

ZOFIA

The cups don't match. I was looking for four of the same set.

EWA

Those are good cups. Have you ever poured coffee before?

WACEK

Zofia's family has hired help. Let her sit. Zofia, come sit.

EWA

You've changed.

WACEK

What do you expect? I was a kid when you left.

EWA

I took care of you from here. The new shoes every season, the tutoring lessons, I slaved away so you learn to believe in nothing. The sacrifice I made—

WACEK

Mother, I am not a puppet. What has your religion done for you?

EWA

What does that mean?

WACEK

You know.

EWA

No, I don't.

WACEK

You aren't exactly canonized. When you left, it took me years to live down your reputation—the speculation and gossip. They said you left because of the butcher. Someone else said you left to get an abortion. Somebody else said Dad kicked you out. I tried to defend you, but the names—

EWA

I taught you to not care about small-minded people.

WACEK

I was a kid, what was I supposed to do? Should I have been philosophical about other boys calling my mother the whore of the village? Do you think new shoes from America make up for that?

EWA

No reason to be cruel. When you're older you'll understand.

WACEK

I'm older now.

EWA

You people chose to come here. I will not spend your vacation apologizing.

MAREK

I am not going home. I could barely afford the trip here.

EWA

You can't stay here long. If my landlord knew, he'd raise my rent.

WACEK

Where do you suggest we go Mother?

ZOFIA

Wacek, we could go back. We can afford it.

EWA

Stay, but be quiet. You had to bring an extra person.

WACEK

Be nice to my wife. She never did anything to you and she makes me happy.

EWA

Zofia, Dear, I'm sorry. I'm a little shocked. I asked my husband to visit—to stay—years ago. I asked and I asked. I waited and I waited. Now, Mr. Eleventh Hour thinks he'll be the knight in dented armor and save the dying damsel. I don't want to be saved by someone who could not be bothered to move his ass for fifteen years. So Zofia, have a nice visit in New York.

(EWA storms into the bedroom and slams the door.)

WACEK

Maybe we should have warned her.

ZOFIA

Is this typical?

WACEK

Yes.

MAREK

No. This is my fault. Most of her incidents are not my fault, but this particular incident is—no it isn't. What did I do? Mailman. Mailman.

(MAREK bangs on the bedroom door. Ewa leaves the bedroom in a dress and high heels.)

EWA

I'll be at church. Make yourself at home.

(EWA exits.)

WACEK

Look at all those channels.

(Addressing Zofia.)

Honey, how about something to eat?

(ZOFIA rummages through the kitchen, which can be seen from the living room.)

MAREK

(Muttering to himself.)

Make yourself at home. I certainly will. I'm not going anywhere. How many channels?

ZOFIA

Your mother knows how to shop. There's everything from back home.

WACEK

Let's start with dessert. Bring some torte.

(She brings the torte and coffee to Wacek and Marek.)

ZOFIA

How long will she be gone?

WACEK

Who knows?

ZOFIA

Just dessert? I'm hungry for something else.

MAREK

Take what you like. Ewa's kitchen has always been generous.

WACEK

Bring the sausages too.

MAREK

A woman's kitchen tells you more about her than her lingerie. What secrets are in cupboard? What does she reveal and what does she hide?

(MAREK admires an expensive chess set.)

Look at the chess set. Do you think she bought it?

WACEK

That's usually how people acquire things.

MAREK

Not everyone. Let's play. Do you two want to play first?

WACEK

Zofia has work to do. Baby, why don't you unpack?

ZOFIA

Where are we staying, the fire escape?

(WACEK sets up chess board. They heartily eat as they play.)

MAREK

That's probably where she's putting me. You two take the bedroom. Ewa and I will manage.

ZOFIA

Are you sure? I'm taking over her bedroom and she already doesn't like me.

MAREK

That's her way of showing affection.

(ZOFIA exits. MAREK addresses WACEK.)

She won't listen to you like that once she's here a while. American women don't. Oprah tells them not to—

WACEK

Zofia's different.

MAREK

They all are. Are you black or white?

WACEK

Black, no white—

(MAREK swiftly swivels the chess board so the white pieces are on his side. They play chess.)

MAREK

Don't hesitate. Whether you cross the street or not, whether you sleep in or wake up…What you don't know at your age, is whether you have coffee or tea can change your entire life.

WACEK

What an epiphany.

MAREK

You'll learn.

WACEK

I know a little more than you think. I am twenty-five.

MAREK

Excuse me—horrible move.

WACEK

Stop sabotaging my game.

MAREK

I'm just talking.

WACEK

Dad, I would understand if you just left her. I love my mother, but I'm too old for you to save the family for my sake. What a farce you people are, marionettes acting out a childish wish. That's why I don't believe in marriage.

MAREK

You seem domestically comfortable.

WACEK

I believe in my own marriage. I believe in Zofia and me, but *most* people are simply colliding molecules that stuck together—

MAREK

This has nothing to do with you and shut up with atoms and the randomness. You think you're the first to think of that? Write a book instead of bothering me.

WACEK

Free yourself. Biologically speaking you're done with what nature requires. I mean, you have no reason to put yourself through the same torture again.

MAREK

When you are your age—

WACEK

Not again—

MAREK

When you are your age, you think you have the time to tear apart and rebuild. Destruction seems so damn seductive. Lives can be so tangled together, they can't be severed.

WACEK

I know she's ill, but that doesn't cancel out who she is.

MAREK

We don't know for sure.

WACEK

Scoundrels and saints, everybody dies. Make peace with her, but I dare you to prove to me why she deserves this extraordinary effort.

MAREK

I don't remember asking your opinion.

WACEK

The question was implied.

MAREK

When you were small, your mother and I thought you were unable to talk. All of the other children were babbling and you were sullenly sucking your thumb. The doctors said you might be mute. We hoped and we prayed you would start speaking. Now, you can't seem to shut up.

(MAREK makes a bad chess move.)

WACEK

Brilliant.

MAREK

When I was a kid, I had a cat. She scratched my arm, pissed the house, and meowed like a she-devil. I loved that cat.

WACEK

So what?

MAREK

Rumor has it; she killed the neighbor's cat. One night, I heard her screech in the backyard and I never saw her again. You've clearly lost the game.

WACEK

You'll see.

MAREK

Did you know we had livestock? After a while, we had to sell them or eat them, but for a while we had sheep.

WACEK

Here we go—

MAREK

There were the stupidest animals. Not like horses. You have to earn the respect of a horse. You have to make a horse want to follow your lead, but a sheep will go anywhere they are lead. Checkmate.

WACEK

Old men have time for games.

MAREK

What pressing engagement do you have?

(WACEK turns to the television and changes the channel.)

WACEK

Zofia, get in here.

MAREK

After a while living here, she won't come when you call.

WACEK

What?

MAREK

Woman here don't do that. They make the men scrub the toilets. You wait until she stops cooking. You may have to retrain her.

WACEK

Stop exaggerating about what you don't know.

MAREK

She's already keeping you waiting.

WACEK

Zofia, what are you doing?

ZOFIA

I was trying to nap.

MAREK

See?

ZOFIA

What?

WACEK

I think we should go out tonight.

ZOFIA

Where?

WACEK

Anywhere, anywhere but here. Do you want to listen to those two fight?

ZOFIA

How long will it last?

MAREK

We've only just begun.

ZOFIA

Let's go.

WACEK

Wear the outfit we bought at the airport.

MAREK

You said you were broke.

ZOFIA

We were, after we went shopping.

WACEK

We'll eat at the café we passed.

MAREK

You kids need money?

WACEK

We're fine.

(ZOFIA exits to the bedroom. WACEK is transfixed by the TV.)

MAREK

You weren't fine when it was time to pay for the taxi.

WACEK

What?

MAREK

Are you going to take a taxi?

WACEK

We'll take the bus.

(MAREK examines Ewa's apartment like a crime scene. The phone rings and he answers it.)

MAREK

Hello?... Is anyone there? Ewa's not home… This is her butler, who are you?

(MAREK hangs up the phone.)

WACEK

Who was it?

MAREK

Wrong number. This place is another universe.

WACEK

New York?

MAREK

No, this apartment. She lived without me here so long. Do you see a picture of me?

WACEK

Don't worry, you were never photogenic.

MAREK

You would think there would be some evidence of my existence—not even a postcard.

WACEK

Maybe you were looking for this.

(WACEK pulls a wedding ring out of the couch.)

MAREK

That isn't mine. Maybe she lost it.

WACEK

It's a man's ring. I saw a man in the hallway when we arrived.

MAREK

It's probably a second-hand couch. Remember when we bought the desk from the dead man's house? We found all kinds of artifacts in the crevices.

WACEK

I'm sure you're right.

(WACEK sets the ring on the coffee table.)

MAREK

You weren't there, when we were young, how magnificent she was. You don't know why jealous people say…

(ZOFIA enters, unseen by Marek and Wacek. She is dressed up for the evening.)

WACEK

What don't I know?

MAREK

People say a lot of things and you don't always know why they say them. Some people have nothing better to do than judge. She had a hard life. You kids don't know what it is to have a hard, hungry life. You don't know, so don't assume what you don't know.

ZOFIA

Wacek didn't mean anything. He just misspoke.

WACEK

I didn't say anything.

ZOFIA

(She flirts with WACEK.)

Do you like it?

MAREK

How much was it?

WACEK

(Addressing MAREK.)

No more than that straight jacket of a suit you bought.

(Addressing ZOFIA.)

You look perfect.

MAREK

Why shouldn't you have nice things? No point in new clothes when the body is too old to honor them. New wine in old skins…

(MAREK tears at his tie, throwing it over a chair.)

ZOFIA

(Comforting MAREK.)

It's a fine suit. A quality suit is an investment.

MAREK

A suit *is* an investment.

ZOFIA

Absolutely.

MAREK

(He is suddenly full of ceremonial inspiration. He regains the bearing of a gentleman.)

All a man needs in life is a well-cut suit and a well-built woman.

WACEK

Now all I need is a decent suit.

ZOFIA

Let's all have a drink before we leave. I found good vodka…not the cheap stuff. Come on, Wacek.

WACEK

I don't drink anymore, you know that.

ZOFIA

No wonder he's an atheist. Make an exception for me.

WACEK

Religion and Vodka both numb you. I want to be fully aware of all of my senses. A conversation overheard, heat and cold on my skin, the first moment when I wake up in the morning. That is the composition of my soul.

ZOFIA

Drinking alone is no fun.

(ZOFIA and MAREK toast without WACEK. MAREK tries but can not hide his exhaustion. ZOFIA sets down the vodka bottle.)

ZOFIA

You must be exhausted from the trip.

MAREK

I could drink the weight of both of you. The best moments in my life are the ones I don't remember.

ZOFIA

We'll be going out soon, why don't you rest in there?

MAREK

Where will you two stay?

ZOFIA

We won't be back until morning anyway. You rest in her room a while.

(MAREK wearily exits to the bedroom.)

ZOFIA

Wacek, we can't stay. Let's leave now. We could get a hotel for a week or so.

WACEK

Do you know what a hotel costs here?

ZOFIA

I have my own money.

WACEK

That is for an emergency.

ZOFIA

This is an emergency. Fine, we'll save our money go stay with the homeless people in a shelter. I hear they feed you soup and give you a blanket. Please, take me anywhere but here.

WACEK

I can't abandon them.

ZOFIA

Give them a couple of days to self-destruct and we can take care of the sole survivor—

WACEK

—If there is a survivor.

ZOFIA

Remember what we left? We have a nice place—

WACEK

—with your parents. We were going to make our own start—

ZOFIA

Living in my home is a bit different than this rat hole of a flat.

WACEK

We all know your parents live well. We're starting over, you and me, in a new city, the premiere city. We are staying.

ZOFIA

Everyday, we'll relive your hapless parent's mistakes.

WACEK

What do you suggest we do?

(They are startled by the sound of a key in the door.)

ZOFIA

We should have escaped.

(EWA enters.)

EWA

I have some good news. I went to see some friends—

WACEK

I thought you went to church.

EWA

Plans change. I asked a favor and I found work for the both of you starting tomorrow.

ZOFIA

You work fast.

EWA

If you're going to stay, you both need to contribute and take care of yourselves. Would you agree?

ZOFIA

Remember, I'm the industrious one.

EWA

It isn't easy getting jobs like these. Do you know how many people are looking for work?

WACEK

What are the jobs?

EWA

At first they said they didn't have work for you, but I said you two were so hard-working and ready to get started, that you'd take anything.

ZOFIA

What are the jobs?

EWA

Wacek, you will be working at the car wash.

ZOFIA

Surely he's qualified for something better. He has a master's degree in philosophy.

EWA

How stupid of me. I should have asked Socrates if he had any job openings. The cash tips will be worth it.

WACEK

(Comforting ZOFIA.)

It's only for a while. I'll be fine.

ZOFIA

OK. If you want to work there, but—

EWA

You, madam, will be working with me.

ZOFIA

I'll be working with you as a maid? I'm trained as an engineer.

EWA

—and I'm trained as a ballerina. If you want an engineering job, go to India. Here, people clean, sell things, or fix things that are made elsewhere.

ZOFIA

I won't go with you. You've been trying to shame me since I arrived, and I won't abide that. I'm not a rugged village girl grateful for the chance to polish shoes.

WACEK

Gritty work is good enough for Wacek, but not for you?

ZOFIA

The work is not good enough for him. He deserves more than your crumbs.

EWA

You should be grateful to have a husband willing to support his household.

(MAREK enters from the bedroom.)

MAREK

I heard that.

EWA

I hope so. Listen princess, you need to be realistic. If you want to stay, you need to contribute and take what is available. It is only temporary.

ZOFIA

Is that what you said to yourself fifteen years ago? I won't let a woman who scrubs toilets for a living tell me what is possible. You can't even read a phonebook in English, let alone Polish. Wacek and I have options and you just want to keep us down with you, so your fallow life doesn't seem so wasted. Insult me if you want, but I see through you.

WACEK

Mom, you have been rough on her.

EWA

Maybe she needs a few calluses.

WACEK

Zofia, we're guests here. Maybe you shouldn't be upsetting her in her condition.

ZOFIA

From what I've heard about your mother, she's always been in some kind of unfortunate condition. I'm sorry you're ill. I am, but only you could turn it into a weapon. She's using your pity against you.

WACEK

Zofia, please—

MAREK

Let her speak her mind.

ZOFIA

She's been doing it for years. She disappoints and betrays you. You think you're almost done with her. Then you remember how hard life was for her and she wins again. Life is hard for everyone.

EWA

Then why don't you take the job?

ZOFIA

I will. I can't wait to work with you.

EWA

Don't feel obligated for my sake.

ZOFIA

I need a few calluses

EWA

I'll make sure you get them.

ZOFIA

We don't want to be out too late. After all, we start work early tomorrow.

WACEK

Don't wait up.

(WACEK and ZOFIA exit. MAREK lights a cigarette.)

EWA

I hate bossy women. Don't smoke in here.

MAREK

I never took you for a puritan. Why am I looking at an ashtray with cigarette butts?

EWA

That's for company.

MAREK

What am I?

EWA

You're not company. I haven't smoked for six months.

MAREK

Of all the habits you chose to give up…

EWA

You can smoke, but you have to share.

MAREK

You want this?

EWA

Give it. Come on. Don't tell my lungs I'm cheating on them.

MAREK

I think they've known for years.

EWA

I wouldn't do it either, if I had options.

MAREK

Smoke?

EWA

Clean.

MAREK

Not everyone can be born to rich parents.

EWA

I though cleaning other people's houses was temporary once. At first I thought, I can stand it for a month. Then, I thought, a year is nothing. A year is everything.

MAREK

Time is—

EWA

What a wasted life…a few years to earnestly flail around and drown. To be done and fall on mercy may be a relief.

MAREK

There's nothing like the peace of the unborn or the deep silence of the tomb.

EWA

(EWA ignores his comforting words.)

To me, the end is a friendly ghost floating around, welcome as long as it goes quickly and takes me with it. Going on would be worse. Everyday is more cumbersome than the next… When I was young, I used to think that I could reinvent myself. I thought, 'I may be nothing, inside I am…' I thought I could make things new by the force of my will, but I've just been myself all my life.

MAREK

It could be worse. It could always be worse. For instance, you could—

EWA

Maybe she's right, but don't tell her I said that. I like seeing her bristle and hiss.

MAREK

Unlike you—

EWA

Unlike…You're supposed to want your children to do better than you, but I'd like to see Wacek humbled—not crushed, mind you—just shaken up. What was he thinking marrying her?

MAREK

It is a good match. She's from Warsaw. Both of her parents are judges. Their dacha is better than most people's regular home. Her mother is elegant, like a queen from a story book. If you can predict what a woman's going to like by her mother, the future looks good. I mean she was—

EWA

Did he marry her for the money?

MAREK

No, she's a lovely girl. What she gave up—

EWA

You want me to pity her?

MAREK

I only met her family the time of the wedding. I took a train. I think if they knew us—

EWA

I am not ashamed of my life.

MAREK

I don't blame Wacek. When he told her family about you, he said you came here for a teaching job.

EWA

What do I teach?

MAREK

Literature. You're apparently a devotee of transcendentalism—

EWA

—of what?

MAREK

You had been planning on coming back to Poland but stayed when you were offered a job as headmaster of girls' school in Massachusetts.

EWA

What an interesting life I'm having.

MAREK

Had. You died on a field trip, when the school bus crashed. Everyone survived but you.

EWA

I hope I at least died instantly.

MAREK

You went right away. You didn't suffer. He was making the most of opportunities. I didn't correct them, because there was the wedding going on and I didn't want to ruin his fresh start. I'm supposed to stop the celebration and the ceremony—

EWA

He said they went to the courthouse.

MAREK

Her parents insisted on a church wedding, even though both of them are non-practicing.

EWA

Two non-practicing people. At least they have that in common. When did Wacek stop believing?

MAREK

Officially, it was in University, but unofficially, he left the church years ago.

EWA

He was my good little boy. You should have taught him—

MAREK

That was years ago. You made your choice.

EWA

Did Zofia know about me?

MAREK

She made up most of the story. You can't blame Wacek for rejecting the past. The life we gave him was unstable. You remember how foolish we both were. When we were that age—

EWA

When we were that age, we were working six days a week. We didn't have the time for cruel fairy tales.

(The phone rings. EWA smiles at the voice on the line.)

EWA

No…of course not…This is a bad time…I don't know…I'll call you.

(EWA hangs up the phone.)

MAREK

That reminds me. Someone called today.

EWA

Did you take down the number?

MAREK

No.

EWA

Did you get the name?

MAREK

No.

EWA

Thanks for the message.

(WACEK knocks and enters without permission.)

WACEK

I didn't mean to interrupt. Zofia and I think you guys should have some time to yourself. You have a lot of arguing to catch up on. Mom, if it's alright, we'll stay at a hotel.

EWA

You don't need my permission.

WACEK

I'm going to get the luggage. So, you don't mind us staying at a hotel?

EWA

Do what you like. You're a grown man, aren't you?

WACEK

You say you don't mind, but it sounds like—

(MAREK motions for WACEK to be quiet.. WACEK goes to the bedroom, where the luggage sits unpacked. ZOFIA sticks her head in front door to look for WACEK.)

EWA

Zofia, Darling, can I help you?

ZOFIA

Just making sure he makes it out alive.

EWA

Family is always welcome at my house.

WACEK

(Shouting from the bedroom)

Zofia, where's the—

ZOFIA

I'll help.

(ZOFIA dashes to the other room. They try to exit with the luggage. One duffle is obviously hastily packed with contents spilling out.)

WACEK

Mom, don't pout. You said yourself we can't stay for long.

EWA

Now I'm used to you. I understand. It's hard to live with a dead woman.

WACEK

Mom, you have to take it in context. It started with one little lie. First we said you were a teacher and her family kept asking questions and story grew bigger. The whole charade was too much. Somehow I blurted something about an accident.

ZOFIA

Did I say 'dead' first?

WACEK

No, I said 'accident' first and then you said 'bus'.

ZOFIA

Once you say someone is dead, it is difficult to take it back.

EWA

(Addressing ZOFIA.)

So my family isn't good enough for your family?

ZOFIA

Were they good enough for you? Your husband is a good, decent man. I marvel at how wonderful Wacek is, considering his mother. I didn't run from my responsibilities, so try to indict me. I had no idea you're so sensitive. You seem so shrewd and practical.

WACEK

Mom, we didn't mean anything. We could stay a couple days.

ZOFIA

Wacek, no.

WACEK

It isn't often a mother is raised from the dead. We're sorry Mom.

(WACEK and EWA embrace. When WACEK isn't looking, EWA gives ZOFIA a searing look.)

ZOFIA

I don't want to be a bother.

EWA

Stay, we'll get to know each other. We'll start over.

ZOFIA

How many times can we start over?

EWA

We have everything in common. We both love Wacek.

(ZOFIA sits on her suitcase.)

ZOFIA

Wacek, I can't stay.

WACEK

Honey, you'll hardly see her. We'll go out to dinner when she's home from work

(ZOFIA remains on her suitcase.)

ZOFIA

I'm thinking about a mint on my pillow, fresh white towels and breakfast delivered by room service. Just like the resort we visited when we went skiing. That was perfect. Remember?

(WACEK tries to move the suitcase while ZOFIA obstinately clings to the suitcase.)

WACEK

We'll stay where I say we stay.

(WACEK pushes the suitcase. ZOFIA stands.)

Now, let's go out to dinner. You'll feel better after a bottle of chardonnay.

ZOFIA

—Half a bottle of chardonnay. Alright.

WACEK

That's right.

(ZOFIA and WACEK exit.)

EWA

They will be in my room. You will sleep in the chair. I'll take the sofa. On the other hand, the chair has a broken spring that will poke your back. If you want, you can have the sofa. Either way, you'll get a back ache.

MAREK

Where are you sleeping?

EWA

Where ever you're not sleeping. I could call a friend with more space. She's a wealthy dentist who's kept her figure. I think she just broke up with her boyfriend.

MAREK

Do we still use those adolescent terms at our age?

EWA

Isn't it time you replaced me? I figured you took a mistress years ago.

MAREK

With your mother living in the house? Leaving me with your mother was the worst wound you inflicted.

EWA

I thought one of you would be dead by now.

MAREK

She will outlast Armageddon. When the world has shattered into bits she will be floating like a monolithic planet.

EWA

She has gained a lot of weight.

MAREK

She bakes cakes in your honor and eats them in your honor.

EWA

She's not here now. Go stay with the dentist. They say she has great legs.

MAREK

That doesn't tell you anything. The legs are the last to go. Everything else is held in by a girdle, once when you unhook it…

EWA

You're too old to be picky.

MAREK

Why play matchmaker for your husband?

EWA

You don't want me anymore. I'm past my expiration date. Besides, I've been more than patient. I sent you the divorce papers and you pretend they didn't arrive.

MAREK

The post is unreliable.

EWA

I sent it three times.

MAREK

I won't sign. I won't break a true marriage.

EWA

The church would not even fault you. That was not the mailman. Would you like the truth?

MAREK

I don't need to know. I'll forgive you if you don't tell me. We've been apart and I understand that you—

EWA

I'll tell you everything about every one of them. There have been many men. I even forgot some of their names. When I arrived in New York years ago, men would miss their subway stop to be near me a little longer. I was like the Siren, drawing them to me. I felt some kind of raw power.

MAREK

I can't listen. I can forgive those desperate years.

EWA

After a while, regret hardly stings. Sometimes, I forgot about you and home. I became an orphan and widow, gloriously alone, but never for long.

MAREK

I still reach across the bed to your pillow, expecting to see you.

EWA

You have always had vivid dreams.

MAREK

You are flesh and soul in my hands. If you and I—if we are not true, then I am a lie. You are my covenant. You are my compass, my north and south. Where can I go, where you will not haunt me? If you abandon me now, I will die before you, even if they bury you first. If only you'd waited—

EWA

(Cleaning off the dishes from the coffee table.)

I would have died in that god-forsaken village…Watching you drink away our future every name day…Watching you sit on the stoop with your useless friends and the stray cats.

(She picks up the mail from the table. MAREK tries to stop her from cleaning.)

MAREK

You make me sound—

EWA

Useless?

MAREK

So let's stop. You, be quiet. See, that's nice. Now, stop wincing. I brought you something.

(He gives her a box of chocolates.)

I was dying to eat these on the plane, but I knew they're your favorite sweets and you'd been missing them. Some of us can delay satisfaction.

(She brings out an identical box.)

EWA

I can buy anything here.

MAREK

(He rips at the box and eats the candy.)

I should have eaten them on the plane. Customs threw away perfectly good sausage, a gift from the butcher. You are so loved in village—

EWA

—not by the wives.

MAREK

Banks don't like robbers either. Forget home. Let's be new in a new city. If we make it here…

EWA

That's just a song. This is just another place, with nothing but the ordinary business of to and fro. You and I— we are an impossible proposition. There is a chasm between us. Do you truly believe we have a chance?

MAREK

Some questions should not be asked. The answer unravels too much.

EWA

I can't help you. I'm not even legal. If I had a green card, I could sponsor you. We'll be two little rats, taking scraps, and hoping we never get caught. For your own sake, go home.

MAREK

All I'm asking is that you don't kick me out tonight. I stay here, on the couch or chair, your choice. You don't have to take me back; just don't kick me out, because I'm not leaving tonight. You have two hundred channels and I've only seen eleven of them. Let's be civil. Tonight, we're not mad. Tonight, you're not sick. We'll have a little cake, a little coffee.

EWA

Fine. Do you still take your coffee with sugar?

MAREK

Yes. Three lumps.

EWA

Too much. Now I drink my coffee black—people here like it strong and bitter.

MAREK

I like mine sweet and corrupted.

(MAREK stirs his coffee.)

(Lights fade on the apartment. WACEK and SOFIA stand on a sidewalk on a harsh winter night. She trails behind him, uncomfortable in her lovely shoes.)

WACEK

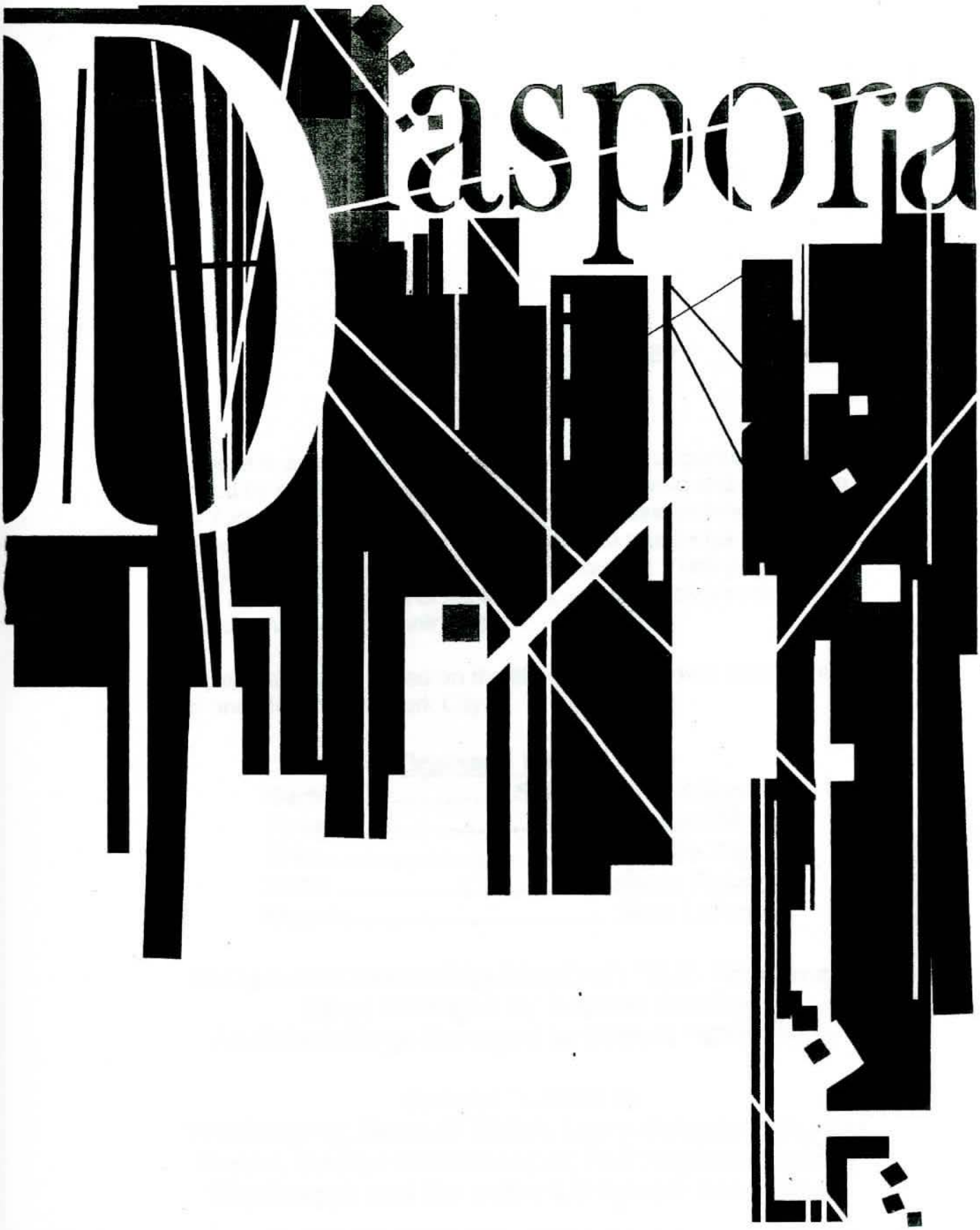
Zofia baby, we will miss the bus if you don't hurry up. Don't pout, we can't afford a taxi. The bus is fine. You should have worn more practical shoes. Hurry up. She's not going to make it in New York. She needs me… and my mother…and my father...I used to think he was a fool with the stupid stories about the village. When our only cow died, he mourned for a year. He passed out—drunk—so many times. Sometimes I covered him with a blanket. Other times, I left him spread out like a corpse on the sidewalk. One time I left him and it rained and he got pneumonia. That was his own fault and a little bit my fault—but almost entirely his fault. If a woman did to me what my mother did to my father, I would…My mother is his vodka. Even though he knows he will suffer, he needs her to numb him and make him feel real. I guess we all need a bit of anesthesia to get us through life. If this is it—if this flesh and mind is all there is—then why shouldn't he

have his trivial dreams? I guess these small hopes are no worse than his vodka. He always said there are no accidents that God knows everything and angels watch us. He told me he was destined to be my mother's protector and she was destined to be his muse, but he could never lucidly see life—like I can. He lived in dreams and his dreams ruined him. I will be different. I will never be anyone's fool. I shape life by the force of my will. I will not be a victim to weak philosophy that can only create slaves. I will be the master of my life. I will be aware of every second of my brief existence—that was our bus. That was our bus. Zofia hurry up, we just missed the bus and we can't afford a taxi.

(ZOFIA finally catches up to him, wincing. She embraces him completely.)

Fine, we'll take a taxi.

APPENDIX B



Diaspora

By M.E. Wlodarczyk

Diaspora is about a Polish family separated by opportunity and reunited by misfortune. Ewa, an immigrant, is living and working in New York after leaving her home to make a living in America. Marek, her hapless but sincere husband, decides to reunite his disparate family after he hears that she is dying of cancer. Their parallel lives collide after fifteen years of separation, when Marek tries to patch together what is left of their love.

Diaspora is loosely based on the life of Ewa, a Polish immigrant who lived and died in New York City.

Dramatis Personae

Marek.....Stephen J. Heffernan
Kasper.....Dane White
Ewa.....Bonnie Zigler
Zofia.....Mallory Fussell
Wacek.....Tom Lehman

Written and Directed by MaryBeth "M.E. Wlodarczyk
Stage Managed by Andrew Stanley
Assistant Stage Managed by Miguel "Miko" Nino

Special Thanks to:
Ted Gregory, Donnell Walsh, Larry Quiggins, Marsha Parker, George Hickenlooper, Phil Hughen, Andrzej Wlodarczyk and the entire LU theatre department

- **Stephen J. Heffernan (Marek):** Stephen began acting in 1996 with The Galic Park Players out of Oak Fotrdy, Il, winning small parts in two plays: ***The Chastitute*** by John B. Keewaw and ***The Bridal Night***. Before he could work on his third GPP production, he relocated St. Louis in 2000 to work on his first low-budget motion picture, ***Cannibal***, written and directed by Wolfgang Lehmkuhl. He acted as much as possible in St. Louis, including in ***Cowboy Logic***, a play by Jerlad Rabushka with Ragged Blade Productions. Hefferman played Laney Buckmaster. Hefferman then did his second motion picture, ***Amphetamine***, written and directed by Chris Gregor. ***Amphetamine*** went on to premier at the Pageant in University City as the closing film of the 2003 St. Louis Filmmakers Showcase to a crowd of over 700, then screened in the 2003 St. Louis International Film Festival. Hefferman then went back to Ragged Blade to perform in the original production ***Rich White Trash***, written and directed by Rabushka. Then Heffernan worked on the motion picture ***Buzz Saw***, written and directed by David Burwettz and Robin Garrelz. ***Buzz Saw*** is available on DVD through SRS Studios. Heffernan is a first year undergrad at LU and a BFA Acting major. He has worked on ***The Goblet***, written by Judith Newmark and directed by Ted Gregory. ***Diaspora*** is Heffernan's second LU play.
- **Dane White (Kasper):** Dane is a senior at LU, and has had a rich history on LU's downstage and main stage; amongst a host of one-acts, he has appeared in **Animal Farm, School for Scandal,** and most recently **Cabaret**. He has thoroughly enjoyed and thanks his cast for tolerating his shenanigans.
- **Bonnie Zigler (Ewa):** Bonnie is a senior at LU. Her acting credits include Miss Watson in ***Big Blue River*** and Sarah in ***Guys and Dolls***. After she graduates, she will be teaching drama in a high school. Bonnie would like thank her loving husband, Clay, and their five wonderful children for their support.
- **Mallory Fussell (Zofia):** Mallory is grateful for the chance to be in the original cast of such an interesting show. She is in her second year at LU and is currently pursuing a degree in musical theatre and arts management. She thanks her friends and her family for supporting her crazy schedules and thanks her cast and crew for an experience she will never forget.
- **Tom Lehman (Wacek):** Tom is a sophomore BFA acting student. He is thrilled to finally have a beard for a part not to mention being a part of this amazing production. He would like to thank his friends, family, cast and crew and girlfriend Stephanie for supporting him.

- **Miguel "Miko" Nino (Assistant Stage Manager):** Professional actor in Panama City, he was nominated for the Theatre National Prize in his native country, for the show ***"Banquete de Despide"*** **(*"Farewell Dinner."*)** He is an award winning writer and a student who feels excited about making the "crossover."
- **Andrew Stanley (Stage Manager):** Andrew is a senior at LU and was delighted to step into the role of stage manager. His other roles throughout the LU theatre department roles have ranged from acting, to directing, to the occasional set building for various shows. Overall, he has enjoyed what little time he has shared with the cast and thanks them all for this opportunity.
- **MaryBeth Wlodarczyk (Writer and Director):** is graduate student at LU and will graduate with her M.F.A. in directing this Spring. Her ten-minute play ***Intersection*** was a regional finalist in the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in 2005 and was produced at LU in spring 2006. She has been blessed to be involved in theatre since high school: acting, writing, directing, and costuming. Her plays ***Garlic and Roses, Temple of Grace***, and ***Mz. Hushadi's theory of Relativity*** have been produced at the university level. When MaryBeth is not writing or directing, she is an adjunct instructor at LU's Belleville campus. MaryBeth would like to thank her darling husband Andrzej for his support and advice. She would like to thank her talented cast and crew, who have given their hard work and creative energy to producing ***Diaspora***.

Cover Graphics by M.E. Wlodarczyk, 2006

APPENDIX C

Intersection

A Play in One Act

Mary Elizabeth Wlodarczyk

CHARACTERS

Henry is a thirty-something, upwardly mobile corporate soldier. He is pure "type A".

Frank, who is Henry's compliant side kick, is a thirty-something corporate drone.

Watson, also thirty-something, is their underrated coworker. He is quiet and patient—most of the time.

SETTING

The three men share a morning ride to the office.

TIME

Morning rush hour in present day America.

(HENRY drives. He honks his horn and runs his hands through his hair.)

HENRY

Get off the road, if you can't drive. Why don't you signal? If you're gonna turn, put on the blinkers, lady. Is the entire world asleep? I'm trying to get to work. Come on people! Let's go.

(HENRY puts on the tape to relax.)

TAPE

Today is a good day. Today is a good day. Everyday brings new opportunities and victories. I welcome—

(HENRY stops the tape before picking up FRANK, who gets in the front seat.)

HENRY

Morning—

FRANK

—or so they call it.

HENRY

Try coffee.

FRANK

Coffee wouldn't work if I shot espresso into my veins.

HENRY

They do that in California.

FRANK

I thought it was a coffee enema.

HENRY

You're behind the times.

FRANK

What is it now, acupuncture?

HENRY

Wrong century.

FRANK

My girlfriend is doing this stupid detox diet. Read it in a magazine.

HENRY

It is all marketing recycling what people forgot about five minutes ago. How is she?

FRANK

Who?

HENRY

Little Miss Detox.

FRANK

Good. OK. She has a new job… always on the phone… always something to fix… meetings…

(HENRY answers his cell phone.)

HENRY

Yeah? (Beat.) What now? (Beat.) What now? She spends eight and half years wearing out my gold card and she wants more? (Beat.) She wants the kid too? (Beat.) I know. I

will remember not to refer to my son in court as "the kid". I am a loving father, damn it. (Beat.) You know what I mean. (Beat.) Do something useful besides drain my bank account. Just kidding— mostly kidding. No hard feelings. (Beat.) Just wrap it up. Finish it. Bye.

(HENRY hangs up.)

FRANK

Trouble?

HENRY

Trouble. You were talking about..

FRANK

She's totally into her job. Never before seen her so career minded.

HENRY

Yeah?

FRANK

Maybe it's time. Maybe I should tie this thing up…

HENRY

Did you hear me talk to my lawyer?

FRANK

That's you.

HENRY

What does that mean?

FRANK

You could piss off Mother Teresa.

HENRY

I like Mother Teresa.

FRANK

She wouldn't like you.

HENRY

She likes everybody—

FRANK

—not you. She's dead anyway.

HENRY

The one woman who could stand me—

(FRANK reaches for the radio and accidentally turns on the TAPE.)

TAPE

Today will be a good day. Today, the universe works with me for my success. The universe—

(HENRY turns off the tape.)

HENRY

Forget the radio.

FRANK

What's that?

HENRY

It isn't mine. Sharon left it.

FRANK

New one?

HENRY

Yeah. She's into psychology.

FRANK

Sure.

(HENRY answers his cell phone.)

HENRY

Baby. (Beat.) Yeah. (Beat.) Sure. (Beat.) Definitely. (Beat.) I'll be there. (Beat.) Bye.

(HENRY hangs up.)

FRANK

Sharon?

(HENRY nods.)

From one box to another—

HENRY

You don't know Sharon. She's not a wife. She's just a temporary thing.

(HENRY waves at Watson and pulls the car over. Watson silently gets into the backseat of the car with a nod to Frank and Henry.)

FRANK

Watson.

WATSON

Frank.

HENRY

Hey Watson.

WATSON

Henry.

FRANK

I put in my notice yesterday.

HENRY

Notice?

FRANK

I'm quitting.

HENRY

For what? Where you gonna go?

FRANK

I got a job as a bartender.

HENRY

You're gonna lose money right?

FRANK

Not as much as you think. I never made as much as you.

HENRY

A bartender? You're gonna finish the presentation.

FRANK

Yeah.

HENRY

You got the new numbers?

FRANK

(To WATSON.)

You got the new numbers?

WATSON

(To FRANK.)

Yeah.

FRANK

(To HENRY.)

Yeah. I have the numbers.

HENRY

She won't marry a bartender. She met a corporate man, not Buddha with a cocktail mixer.

FRANK

We'll see.

HENRY

Unless you're trying to get rid of her by disappointing her. Passive aggressive. That's it.

FRANK

You are listening to this.

(FRANK plays the tape.)

TAPE

You are a good person. Forgive yourself for—

(HENRY shuts the tape off.)

HENRY

Shut it off. Shut up.

FRANK

Are you seeing a shrink too?

HENRY

Shut up, bus boy. Watson, say something. Every morning, you sit there like a monk. What is it you do?

WATSON

When Frank goes, I'll have his job. I'll be working with you.

FRANK

They replaced me with you? They replaced me with Watson?

WATSON

Joe. My first name is Joe.

HENRY

I've never heard your name before.

WATSON

I told you last week, last month, when we first met… You never remember names. That's why you lost the Reynold's account.

FRANK

I am replaced by—

WATSON

We are all replaceable— including me.

HENRY

A bartender?

FRANK

A bartender.

(FRANK plays the tape.)

HENRY

Stop it. Why go? What's wrong with this life? What's wrong with this job? Why leave me with Watson?

WATSON

Joe. The name is Joe.

FRANK

Look at you. If you didn't have alimony to pay soon, you would run. Look at Watson here.

WATSON

Joe.

FRANK

Watson is there— how many years?

WATSON

Ten. I started in the mailroom—

FRANK

Ten years and he has— what do you have?

(WATSON ignores him.)

HENRY

What do you have after ten years?

WATSON

If it wasn't for the price of gas, I would—

HENRY

I've been there four years and I've been promoted six times. I always cover for you. I always make excuses for you. You don't care. You don't try. Watson is boring, but he tries. He cares about his work.

WATSON

Stop the car. I'll take the bus.

HENRY

Watson— sorry, Joe— you'll be late if you have to wait for the bus. Stay. I promise Frank won't be obnoxious anymore.

FRANK

Me? I'm only making the point that you think you matter there, but you're a sharecropper. You're a gardener. You're a butler. You eat in the executive dining room once a year and get kibble the rest of the year.

HENRY

At least it is profession with possibility.

FRANK

The possibility that you will be one day older tomorrow… Another day older the next day. You will have exchanged bits of your life for security.

HENRY

It is better than working at a bar.

FRANK

Maybe so. I'm not going back.

HENRY

You gave two weeks notice. You're obligated.

FRANK

No, you're obligated. Joe, take the job today. You know what to do. Stop the car.

HENRY

Wait—

HENRY

Wait—

(HENRY pulls the car over and FRANK leaves.)

Watson, get in the front seat. I'm not a chauffeur.

(WATSON gets out of the car and proudly sits in the front seat.)

HENRY

You have the new numbers?

WATSON

Yes. Yeah.

HENRY

You ready for the presentation?

WATSON

No problem.

HENRY

You just had to push Frank out. You just bulldoze over everybody, don't you Watson?

WATSON

Joe.

HENRY

You are "Watson" to me. (Beat.) I'll try to remember "Joe".

(HENRY stops the car.)

I'm gonna pick up a paper and a coffee. I'm running early.

(WATSON gets out of the car. HENRY drives and plays the tape.)

TAPE

This is a good day. Today is the best day of your life. Live as if this was your last day. Live as if this were your last on earth. Feel the miracle that is your life. Feel the blood pulsing in your veins. Feel your hand, how well is serves you. Feel your heart, how well it protects you. Live. Live. Live as if this were your last day.

HENRY

(Yelling at the other drivers.)

Watch where you're going! Left turns. Why is everything a left turn?

(HENRY recoils as a car hits his car. Lights out.)

APPENDIX D

A momentous experience that informed my growth as a director was directing *Intersection*, a ten-minute play I wrote in 2004; the script was a finalist at the 2005 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival ten-minute play competition and was produced by students at the festival January 20, 2005. I later directed *Intersection* at Lindenwood University as part of a directing class in the spring of 2006.

In the end, I evolved to the point at which I wanted complete autonomy as a director and grew more courageous in my interpretive skills and my ability to immerse myself in "the intuitive creative process" as practiced by some more radical directors, depending on the production. My directing choices in my Lindenwood University production of *Intersection* tended toward the "radical" (Benedetti 14-15).

Intersection, on the other hand, is an abrupt drama full of dialogue ranging from badinage tinged with resentment to fierce disagreements. The three main characters in *Intersection* are cohorts; they are all male, are similar ages and are all corporate office workers.

Intersection is a realistic script with strong aspects of the absurd, in the enigmatic form of the "tape", which I interpreted as post-modern Greek chorus, almost resembling ornate statues on gravestones. *Intersection's* opening music "Karma Police" by Radiohead reflected the edgy anxiety of the three young men struggling in a corporate jungle. The three main characters, the corporate workers, are crowded together in a car to carpool to work together in an unidentified city.

The Lindenwood spring 2006 production of *Intersection* was the second production of *Intersection*. The first production of *Intersection* was at January 2005 at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival.

Even though *Intersection* did not break through the regional finals to the national level of competition, my observation of the first production informed me and gave me time to ruminate about what I wanted to do with the *Intersection* script if given the chance. I spent a week at the festival in January 2005 participating in an assigned group of students from various universities with a faculty advisor from the conference. As part of the festival program, I was required to sit in on the auditions and the rehearsals. Although I was asked my opinion on different occasions, I did my best to remain a quiet and neutral observer. I wanted the directing to be under the authority of the capable student director; my motivation for this lack of intrusion was that I knew that I would want the same freedom and respect as a director, if I were in the same room with the playwright while I directed. I saw my role in the workshop process as supporter of the director, especially during rehearsal. I also thought that I had already done my part in writing the *Intersection* script and any further comment would be overreaching the boundaries of the playwright. I considered the fact that if there were strengths or flaws in the *Intersection* script, they would both be revealed in the performance and that was as it should be. I wanted the fledgling script to be vigorously tested by another director in front an artistically invested audience— the theatre festival was the perfect hatchery for such a birth.

When contemplating *Intersection*, it is pivotal that the ten-minute play format is not reduced to being strictly defined as an abridged version of the full-length or one-act

play, as so many readily assume (Mitchell 70). The intense and concentrated form of the ten-minute play is a beast of its own nature. What opponents of the ten-minute play see as flaws, limited psychological exposition and circumscribed plots, proponents of the ten-minute play appreciate as unique advantages. Moreover, the audiences of ten-minute plays have different expectations than viewers of relatively longer play forms. Mitchell writes:

> Producers of ten minute plays… often prefer works that seem understandable in themselves, an aspect of information which remains inimical to the art of storytelling… While this sort of storytelling seems to preclude the complex pleasures of great drama, such an approach may be necessary because, within ten minutes or less, producers and spectators expect the play to be 'complete'. (71)

What is compelling about ten-minute plays, such as *Intersection* and the entire genre, is the characteristic exigency of the story and the tendency to explore nonrealistic aspects of writing or staging. It is as if the finite presentation time brings out the boldness in ten-minute play authors, often bringing out surrealistic elements such as the enigmatic character of the detached tape in *Intersection*, which may take on different interpretations under the auspices of different directors (Mitchell 75).

When I produced *Intersection* at Lindenwood University as part of a directing class, I knew with clarity what I wanted to do with the script. In writing *Intersection*, I felt a certainty in purpose. Before *Intersection*, I had always written and directed realistic plays. I wanted to experiment with surrealistic elements ensconced within a realistic play. In the case of *Intersection*, the realistic is juxtaposed with the dreamlike voice of the self-

help tape. There are three "human" characters in *Intersection* and then there is the sibylline "tape". I *intentionally* did not specify what form the tape playing in the car should take, because I wanted to offer creative and speculative directors a flexible script that allowed for the elasticity of their autonomous imagination. I envision every future production of *Intersection* having a distinct and inventive form of the tape, depending on the proclivities of the director and where their individual mind takes them. In the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival production, the undergraduate student director inventively interpreted the self-help "tape" as a petite Asian spirit, played by an actress who was a trained dancer and moved throughout the play in contortions and was a physical part of the car. In contrast, my Lindenwood University production took a different spin on the chorus. With my interest in mythology, I envisioned the tape as a chorus as living statues with a Greek chorus influence yet still futuristic. I divided the pop-psychological lines for the tape into layers of speech, reader's theatre style. In my production, I called the chorus characters muses. This is an example of how I organized the "tape's" lines:

MUSE 1 & MUSE 2. This is a

MUSE 1 & MUSE 2 & MUSE 3. good day

MUSE 1. today

MUSE 2 & MUSE 3. is the best day

MUSE 1 & MUSE 3. of your life.

MUSE 1 & MUSE 2 & MUSE 3. Live

MUSE 1 & MUSE 2. as if this was your

MUSE 1 & MUSE 2 & MUSE 3. last

MUSE 1 & MUSE 2. day.

The final effect was smooth and ethereal because, despite how the towering muses' speech was divided, they all spoke with natural grammatical pauses as if one person was speaking. The statuesque muses dexterously writhed and twisted when they were speaking, but stood gracefully frozen when they were not speaking which acutely highlighted their unearthly beauty looming high above the three main characters in the car. The choppy dialogue of the human characters in the car was opposite in nature to that of the muses; this contrast created an enchanting rhythm.

HENRY. You're gonna lose money, right?

FRANK. Not as much as you think, I never made as much as you.

HENRY. A bartender? You're gonna finish the presentation.

FRANK. Yeah.

HENRY. You have the new numbers?

FRANK. *(To Watson)* You have the new numbers?

WATSON. *(To Frank)* Yeah.

FRANK. *(To Henry)* Yeah. I have the new numbers.

It is fundamental to remember that story of *Intersection* is focused on the three corporate guys driving to work. For my purposes in my directing choices, it is cardinal for me to explain the counterpoint of my own interpretation of my absurdist interpretation of the" tape" in the car, working contrary to the everyday conversation. My vision of realistic conversation of corporate men sharply contrasting with the surrealistic self-help tape came from extended exposure to the script and over a year to think about what I truly

wanted out of the production; the combination of these factors resulted in my feeling justified in bold directing choices.

Intersection is ten-minute play about friendship and hierarchy. Three young corporate men— Henry, Frank, and Watson— drive to work, discussing career and pivotal life choices along the way. Frank has decided to leave his corporate job for a bartending job and a completely different life track, which angers his dominant mentor and protective friend Henry. Choleric Henry, on the other hand, is always swiftly taking all the right steps up the proverbial company ladder. Phlegmatic Watson, who is perpetually overlooked by both Henry and Frank, observes shifting dynamics of the uneven friendship between usually compliant Frank and bellicose Henry; the change in this relationship is as disruptive as the shifting of earth's tectonic plates. Frank's decision frustrates an already angry Henry, who is caustically negotiating his acrimonious divorce via cell phone between conversations with Frank and Watson and futilely attempting to keep Frank from playing the once hidden self-help book recording playing in his car. An infuriated Henry expels Frank from his car and the corporate life in they have endured together for years. The newly empowered Watson takes Frank's seat in the front of the car literally and figuratively, since Watson is next in line for Frank's job. Henry, who is running early and decides to pick up a paper and a coffee before going to work, drops off Watson at the office. Just as Henry is alone again in the car, the mood of *Intersection* takes a major shift. Henry chooses to play the formerly secret recording to soothe his overwrought nerves. The play ends with a crash, represented in the current version of the script by an abrupt blackout. The script went through different versions of this ending, the earlier version persistently including the actual sound of the car crash. A blackout verses

a sound effect may seem like a minute detail, but became an example of the complex issue of what happens when a director rigidly follows stage directions, despite defects in stage directions.

The issue of how to technically handle the end of *Intersection* was a challenge. The script that was at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival included the stage direction, "The sound of a car crash is heard just before the lights black out" (Wlodarczyk 7). The capable student director assigned to *Intersection* did all that he could to be loyal to the text, including the sound effect of the car crash. The student director at the festival chose an interminable crash sound that made the ending of *Intersection* seem to be never-ending. The result was a sharp contrast between a play with staccato dialogue that progressed quickly and organically throughout the entire production up to the incongruently prolonged ending. One of the three judges at the festival said that they liked the play and the dialogue, but the ending was too complete with the extended sound of the car crash. This was not the fault of the competent and diligent student director at the festival, but rather a flaw in the stage direction in the script— in other words the author! My play made it through to the regional finals, but did not break into the top three because of the imperfection in the script's ending— one short sentence that I chose may have cost me the chance to go further. Nonetheless, I was thrilled to make it regional finals after years of trying. Before I sent in the script, I was even originally tempted not to enter the competition, thinking I had become a philanthropist after all of the entry fees I had already paid to the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. Then I thought I ought to give it one more shot; one more try might make a difference.

When I produced *Intersection* at Lindenwood University as part of a directing class, I naively thought *I* could avoid the inherent problem of a drawn-out crash ending and still keep the dramatic sound of the car crash. Like the well-meaning student director at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, I was doggedly thinking that I must be unwavering loyal in following the script's stage directions. In my Lindenwood University production of *Intersection,* I was delighted with my choice of talented actors, I was excited about my own postmodern Greek chorus interpretation of the celestial tape playing in the car, and the brief rehearsal process was rewarding and innovative with an excellent esprit de corps. I, however, fell into the same unavoidable trap of the car crash sound effect. As the author and director, I could have empowered myself to cut out the problematic sound effect. I, however, wanted to be perfectly true to the script. I mistakenly thought, having seen the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival version of my play, I could do the ending differently without the protracted ending. Despite my pleasure with the Lindenwood University production as a whole, the car crash sound at the end was still problematic. The judge at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival was right; the sound effect made the ending *too* complete. The glitch was in the script the entire time in both productions. After my Lindenwood University production of *Intersection,* I permanently changed the script to omit the problematic stage direction. Now, *Intersection* ends with a simple "Lights out", so the audience can imagine the car crash rather than be spoon fed a prepackaged conception of a car crash. After two productions, *Intersection* is better because of this small but radical change. The human imagination is always more varied and inventive than a sound effect.

I want future audiences to imagine the fear, the slow motion, and the uncertainty of a car crash.

I had had opportunities to direct my own work before *Intersection*, but the difference was the scale of the project. As an undergraduate, I directed short plays. This repertoire includes *Mz. Hushadi's Theory of Relativity*, a play I wrote, directed, publicized and took to a popular coffee house, where it was performed. Also as an undergraduate, I saw another one of my plays, *Garlic and Roses* directed by a fellow student; as a matter of principle, I stayed away from *Garlic and Roses* rehearsals so the considerate director would not feel encumbered by my expectations. In my fledgling years, I also directed plays written by other authors as seen in the following two examples: *Anne of Green Gables* and *The Importance of Being Earnest.* In my educational experience, I have had two occasions to direct an extended one-act and one full-length show: *Anne of Green Gables* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* respectively. *Anne of Green Gables* was a project I adopted after the original student director dropped out of a directing class and the show needed a director midstream. I was honored to be invited by my professor and advisor to take on a story I loved at this stage of the production— what a challenge! My mission in *Anne of Green Gables* included a reorganization of the show and some rewrite of the adaptation to smooth out what had been left before the previous director that withdrew from the show. Joining an existing show with an established cast as a director was intriguing and ambitious project. I can not say that I have ever learned so much about directing or psychology so quickly. It was baptism by fire and I was an improved director and an altered person after the experience.

I came to direct *The Importance of Being Earnest* as an undergraduate by my own volition. The large main stage was engaged with a colossal musical production; I knew, however, that the black box theatre was unoccupied that semester and that a rich surplus of talented actors remaining after the actors had been chosen for the main musical. I pursued departmental permission to direct a full-length play in my beloved black box theatre and went forward with the verbal wiles of Oscar Wilde. Directing *The Importance of Being Earnest* was a stimulating test for several reasons: the text is challenging for the undergraduate age group, the play script is artfully written, and I wanted to produce a Victorian play in an unlikely space— an intimate black box with three sides for the audience. In this setting, the interactions had an exquisite potency no grand stage could offer. This production did not have a proscenium complete with every cluttered Victorian trinket. I worked with the concept of the suggestion of the Victorian era rather than every "bell and whistle". The final result of this production in a miniature space made Wilde's conundrums and graceful confusion direct and personal to the audience. Directing *The Importance of Being Earnest* was a thrilling tempest as pertinently described by Claudel. He states:

> From top to bottom, from left to right, the various elements join together and suck themselves like a whirlpool both actors and play. But, as we all confusedly feel, is that not how things happen in real life? Are we not all waiting for the pitiless summons of the stage manager, commanding our entrances and exits in this play going on around us? The moment has come! (136)

All of these valuable experiences, combined with my extended experiences with *Intersection*, influenced where I landed as a director philosophically was in Benedetti's category of a radical director. Benedetti explains:

> The radical esthetic eschews the forms of the past altogether and returns to the *radix* or *source* of the play to generate new forms inspired by the original; thus the text may, for the radical director, be only a source of inspiration for anew creative process. (15)

This position resonated with me and made the most practical sense. Why grapple for a past ideal that can not touched, but only viewed from a distance. I agree with Grenz, when he states:

> In a sense, theatre is perhaps the most appropriate artistic venue for the expression of the postmodern rejection of modernism. The modernist movement saw a work of art as transcending time, as expressing timeless ideals. The postmodern ethos, in contrast, celebrates transience— and transience is inherent in performance. (26)

This was particularly true in my production of *Intersection*. I wrote the piece for radical directors who want to experiment. The role of the tape gives way to varying visionary interpretations, as it should be. I wanted more than directing scenes in which I had to abjectly serve the text. I wanted to paint the stage in broad bright strokes and new combinations. In my function as director in *Intersection*, I used improvisation, which harvested the imagination of the actors. The actresses who played the tape, interpreted as muses, choreographed movements that were comforting but could never reach Henry, the main character (Wlodarczyk 15). If I had been what Benedetti calls a "conservative

director", I would have simply had the tape be a sound effect; the literal interpretation of the tape, however, was too ordinary for me to put my name on it as a director. To simply have the tape be a dull sound effect would have been waste of creative potential (Wlodarczyk 13-14). Benedetti writes:

> The conservative would insist that the production of a play be as transparent as possible, its function being to transmit the text directly, completely, faithfully— and therefore anonymously— with a minimum of "distortion" caused by the director's personal point of view. (Wlodarczyk 13-14)

This attitude manifested itself in a allowing a certain amount of freedom for the main characters: Henry, Frank, and Joe. One actor wrote, "She gave the guys a lot of room to grow with their characters. It was interesting." My intention was to create an atmosphere of openness and guided innovation. Another actor wrote, "Mary Beth was very pleasant to work with. She made the actors feel comfortable with her, her show, the other actors and the environment". Another actor wrote:

> Once we got our lines down, she let us improvise and find our own way. I liked being able to improvise. I've studied improvisation, but I don't get the chance use what I learned very often in the usual play.

Respecting the actors and their needs was significant to me, because they become the soul of the show. According to Hodge:

> What we are usually not so aware of is how actors continually assault all of our senses by making us constantly taste, smell, and touch, as well as see and hear, in very special ways. We are inclined to take actors for

> granted because so much of what good actors do is usually so deftly and subtly done, and is so right and truthful, that we are rarely conscious of the process. (71)

In directing Intersection, I often referred to Hodge's advice and activities. One example was in Intersection when, as a cast, we discussed the question, "What is the difference between hand properties and set properties?" as posed by Hodge (131). This was especially compelling considering the Muses were, in a sense, part of the set. The car Henry drove was entirely in the actors' imagination. The hand properties that most indicated character was the briefcases of Henry, Frank, and Watson. Henry had a slick briefcase. Frank carried a more casual briefcase with a loose construction and unorganized contents. Watson carried a modest but practical briefcase. Each actor created the contents of their briefcases as an expression of their character. The Muses, although stationary, chose how they felt about the action of Henry, Frank, and Watson. One muse chose to be sympathetic, one chose to be gently disapproving and another chose to pity the main characters.

Every production I directed, ranging from short scenes in early directing classes to higher maintenance shows which required full-scale analysis was my unadulterated joy. "The heart wants what it wants" is a phrase I used in application to the character Marek, but this expression applies to me. When I direct a play, I am never tired or discouraged. On the contrary, I am invigorated. No trouble outside of rehearsal enters my mind. When I am in the theatre, I am in the theatre with abandonment, with a singular focus that is never casual. I care and try to understand my audience, whether it is students, children, or the general public.

As part of my directing experience I directed a few skits in the category of children's theatre. I wrote the skits and took them to the Daniel Boone Home for their reenactment festival. I dove into this project as if it was Shakespeare for the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. My Daniel Boone Home production, which was featured on the morning news, was as serious to me as Chekhov. Some of my characters had a cow costume, because this was children's theatre. We diligently practiced and practiced working with the cow costume until the two girls who inhabited the cow costume could do the perfect "cha-cha-cha" dance steps— we created a dancing cow that fit perfectly into the rustic atmosphere of a historical reenactment fair. The effect of the "cha-cha-cha" delighted audiences, especially the children and made the adults laugh. The expression goes that there are no small parts, only small actors; I think the same applies to directors. When I direct, I always consider it an honor and a significant responsibility. I have been accused of being sentimental and intense, but it is this sentiment for directing that gives me my passion to improve myself and my work with every production, no matter how small the cast or how short the script. When did I become a director? I always was— I was just waiting for the ripe time.

I have stated that, inside my mind, I philosophically define myself as a radical director, but I feel confident that my experiences at Lindenwood University have enabled me to function on all major points in Benedetti's spectrum, from conservative to radical. If I was professionally called upon to direct in a conservative manner, I could *respect* the demands and parameters of the project, because this is what it is be professional and considerate. In the middle of Benedetti's spectrum, as with *Diaspora*, I can comfortably function as moderately liberal director.

Given the chance to produce a play in the abstract and radical tradition, as I did with *Intersection,* I could certainly make the most of the intuitive opportunity, because this is where my greatest directing desire exists. It is my intention to seek out more surreal productions, in order to learn to make the abstract palatable for an audience who has been fed a steady diet of reproductions. My personal mandate is to create and combine new forms. I do not know the shape this will take, but I know the direction. In short, I feel ready to lead and learn from future projects, because my education has just begun.

APPENDIX E

I. Given Circumstances

A. Environmental Facts

1. Geographical Location

The location is a car on a road in an unidentified city. Since Henry, Frank and Watson have an extended commute every morning, it is possible they live in the surrounding suburbs. The dialogue indicates that the location is far enough away from California for California to be considered exotic, as the following conversation indicates. Chances are they live in "Flyover Country", the vast and underappreciated land between New York and Los Angeles.

HENRY. Morning—

FRANK. —or so they call it.

HENRY. Try coffee.

FRANK. Coffee wouldn't work if I shot espresso into my veins.

HENRY. They do that in California.

FRANK. I though it was a coffee enema.

HENRY. You're behind the times. (Wlodarczyk C3)

2. Date

I wrote *Intersection* in 2005, but the play is relevant in present day corporate culture. An altercation between Henry and Watson highlights this current relevance to the present economic environment with high unemployment rates and viable jobs are precious. People who rely on their job for their standard of living must often tolerate

unpleasant aspects of their work along with the rewards, because this is part of the process of creating a gratifying career.

FRANK. Watson is there— how many years?

WATSON. Ten. I started in the mailroom.

HENRY. Ten years and he has— what do you have?

WATSON. If it wasn't for the price of gas, I would—

HENRY. I have been there four years and have been promoted six times. (Wlodarczyk C7)

3. Economic Environment

Consumer culture, which can be brightly seductive and exciting, dominates the economic environment by influencing the choices of the characters. Henry makes a point of showing off his credit limit, "She spends eight and half years wearing out my gold card…" (Wlodarczyk C3). This same consumer culture often absorbs rotating trends, as Frank and Henry discuss.

FRANK. What is it now, acupuncture?

HENRY. Wrong century.

FRANK. My girlfriend is doing this stupid detox diet. Herbal. Read it in a magazine.

HENRY. It's all marketing recycling what people forgot about five minutes ago. How is she?

FRANK. Who?

HENRY. Little Miss Detox. (Wlodarczyk C3)

The maintenance of the characters' personal economic survival depends on their work; they work midlevel office jobs in an unnamed corporation in the United States. All three characters rely on these jobs for a living, so their individual views of their economic security are predominately middle-class. They know they must put in the time and effort for basic security. This attitude extends to Frank's girlfriend. Frank states, "She's totally into her job… never before seen her so career minded" (Wlodarczyk C4). The following conversation shows Watson's patience and Henry's acceptance of the rules of their world.

> FRANK. Watson is there— how many years?
>
> WATSON. Ten. I started in the mailroom.
>
> HENRY. Ten years and he has— what do you have?
>
> WATSON. If it wasn't for the price of gas, I would—
>
> HENRY. I have been there four years and have been promoted six times.
>
> (Wlodarczyk C7)

4. Political Environment

The political environmental of Henry, Frank, and Watson is literally represented by their physical locations and what they are doing in the car. Watson sits in the back seat until Frank leaves. Henry drives, of course, and Frank is his passenger. The power games they play are based on this hierarchy.

> WATSON. When Frank goes, I'll have his job. I'll be working with you.
>
> FRANK. They replaced me with you? They replaced me with Watson?
>
> (Wlodarczyk C6)

5. Social Environment

The social environment is present-day, middle-class America. More specifically, it is decidedly corporate and closely tied to their interpersonal political environment. Henry, Frank, and Watson abide by the social etiquette of their office and suburban habitat. Their behavior is closely tied to how they see themselves in their milieu. For example, they probably dress in a reserved and neutral way, including obligatory suits or sports jackets with ties. The fact that they carpool together indicates that they also value being politically correct, because carpooling indicates that a person conserve resources, which is fashionably promoted in marketing. Watson, however, enjoys carpooling the least of all three; he mutters, "If it wasn't for the price of gas, I would—" (Wlodarczyk C7).

6. Religious Environment

The characters of *Intersection* joke about two major religious figures: Mother Teresa and Buddha. These two dissimilar religious references show the diversity of beliefs and the mass media exposure to the great variety of religions in the United States. When Frank alludes to Henry that Frank is thinking about marrying his girlfriend, Henry warns him about marriage.

HENRY. Did you hear me talk to my lawyer?

FRANK. That's you.

HENRY. What does that mean?

FRANK. You could piss off Mother Teresa.

HENRY. I like Mother Teresa.

FRANK. She wouldn't like you.

HENRY. She likes everybody—

FRANK. —not you. She's dead anyway.

HENRY. The one woman who could stand me— (Wlodarczyk C4)

Henry will not be topped, however, and chastises Frank. "Susan won't marry a bartender. She met a corporate man, not Buddha with a cocktail mixer" (Wlodarczyk C6). Henry is referring to Frank's careful and philosophical choice to leave the reliable office job he hates and become a bartender for personal fulfillment. The reference to Buddha, who gave up everything to become enlightened, means that Henry thinks Frank ruminates more than he produces.

The tape can also be interpreted as religious, in the sense that the self-help tape shows a secular belief in the self. It is the assumption that a person can choose to improve their lives. Henry listens to the tape in private— or at least tries— because he believes in self-improvement and efficiency. Henry does not want to waste time during his commute, so he uses the time to make himself a better person. This shows that despite his arrogant demeanor, he is secretly aware of his flaws and self-assuredly believes he can fix himself. He essentially has faith in his faith.

TAPE. Today will be a good day. Today, the universe works with me for my success. Today, the universe— (Wlodarczyk C4).

B. Previous Action

Previous action includes each character's morning routines. Henry puts on his sharply dry-cleaned clothes and his hair is precise. His look is sharp, because be adheres to the philosophy of looking like the job you want, not the job you have. He also probably cleaned out his car and filled it with gas, because an efficient image to matters

to Henry and he is always prepared. Frank, not a morning person, certainly takes longer to wake up and dress, as proven by the following dialogue.

HENRY. Morning—

FRANK. —or so they call it.

HENRY. Try coffee.

FRANK. Coffee wouldn't work if I shot espresso into my veins.

(Wlodarczyk C3)

Watson, of course, is the last to be picked up. While this may be a reflection of his location, it is just as likely that he waits the longest because Henry and Frank disdain him.

B. Polar Attitudes

All three characters experience striking polar attitude shifts. Although Watson is the quietest and most overlooked of the group, he makes the greatest change of the group. He begins sitting in the backseat, sitting there like a spare tire. He finishes the play in the front seat and with a promotion at work. He finally asserts himself with his colleagues with characteristic drollness.

HENRY. Watson, say something. Every morning you sit there like a monk. What is it you do?

WATSON. When Frank goes, I'll have his job. I'll be working with you.

(Wlodarczyk C6)

Frank's polar attitude shift occurs when he decides that, rather than waiting the customary two weeks to leave the job he has quit, he will not even go to work at all, whether Henry approve or not.

FRANK. I put in my notice yesterday.

HENRY. Notice?

FRANK. I'm quitting.

HENRY. For what? Where you gonna go?

FRANK. I got a job a bartender. (Wlodarczyk C5)

Henry's polar attitude shift is subtle but still profound. Henry is trying to change, as shown by the self-help tape he listens to when no one is in the car. Certain changes, such as his divorce, are forced upon him. His polar attitude shift is almost inconspicuous. Morning after morning, Henry calls Watson by a nickname Watson does not like: "Watson". Watson's real name is Joe, but the other two guys ignore this. Henry's shift is when he commits to trying to remember Watson's real name.

HENRY. You're ready for the presentation?

WATSON. No problem.

HENRY. You had to push Frank out— you just bulldoze over everybody, don't you Watson?

WATSON. Joe.

HENRY. You are "Watson" to me. (Beat.) I'll try to remember "Joe". (Wlodarczyk C8)

II. Dramatic Action

A. Choice of Words

1) HENRY. "Signal" (C3) is a driver's indication if they are going to turn.
2) HENRY. "Blinkers" (C3) are lights in a car that warn other drivers of upcoming turns.

3) TAPE. "Opportunities" (C3) refers to favorable situations.

4) TAPE.. "Victories" (C3) refers to circumstances in which a person achieves desired goals.

5) HENRY . "Coffee" (C3) is a common caffeinated drink that is ubiquitously part of American business culture.

6) FRANK. "Espresso" (C3) is an extra strong and condensed kind of coffee.

7) HENRY . "California" (C3) is a state perceived by the characters of *Intersection* to be particularly eccentric

8) FRANK. "Enema" (C3) is a type of systematic cleansing.

9) FRANK. Frank. "Acupuncture" (C3) is a kind holistic healing involving needles and energy flow.

10) FRANK. "Girlfriend" (C3) is female romantic companion.

11) FRANK. "Detox diet" (C3) refers to a diet that cleanses the body of impurities.

12) FRANK. "Herbal" (C3) refers to holistic remedies.

13) FRANK. "Marketing" (C3) indicates the force of advertising in present culture.

14) FRANK.. "Recycling" (C3) refers the fashionable practice of reusing items in order to be "green".

15) HENRY . "Little Miss Detox" (C3) refers to Frank's girlfriend, who is devoted to a special cleansing diet.

16) HENRY. "Gold card" (C3) refers to a credit card with a high spending limit.

17) HENRY. "Kid" (C3) is a casual slang term for a child.

18) FRANK. "Career minded" (C4) refers to being focused on one's career over other matters.

19) HENRY. "Lawyer" (C4) is a slang term for an attorney.

20) FRANK.. "Mother Teresa" (C4) is a famous nun who worked to help the indigent in India.

21) TAPE. "Good day" (C4) refers to a day during which a person has a positive attitude and events go along in a convenient manner.

22) TAPE. "Universe" (C4), in this context, indicates all of the influences in a person's world.

23) HENRY. "New one" (C4) indicates another girlfriend in a long line of short-term girlfriends.

24) FRANK. "Box" (C5) refers to the confinements of a person being literally or psychologically constricted.

25) FRANK. "Notice" (C5) indicates the official statement a person gives when quitting a job.

26) FRANK. "Bartender" (C5) is professional drink mixer and drink server.

27) HENRY. "Presentation" (C5) refers to a business demonstration for the purpose of selling an idea or product.

28) HENRY. Frank. Watson. "New numbers" (C5) means the numerical figures that are a part of a presentation.

29) HENRY. "Buddha" (C6) is a historical religious figure who sought enlightenment through sacrifice.

30) HENRY.. "Cocktail mixer" (C6) is bar tool for mixing drinks.

31) HENRY. "Passive aggressive" (C6) refers to a person behaving in a way that is quietly sabotaging.

32) FRANK. "Shrink" (C6) is a slang term for a therapist.

33) HENRY. "Busboy" (C6) refers to a person who cleans the dirty dishes off of tables at restaurants, which is a less important position than a server.

34) HENRY. "Monk" (C6) refers to a person who is devoted to an ascetic religious life.

35) WATSON. "Replaceable" (C6) refers to having personal characteristics and abilities that are common and easy to replicate.

36) WATSON.. "Mailroom" (C7) refers to the lowly part of a company where mail is sorted.

37) WATSON. "Price of gas" (C7) refers to one aspect of the cost of living— how much it costs a person to get to and from work.

38) HENRY.. "Promoted" (C7) refers to achieving a higher level of status at work.

39) WATSON. "Bus" (C7) refers to cheap but slow public transportation.

40) FRANK. "Sharecropper" (C7) refers to someone who works to farm other people's land for a small profit.

41) FRANK. "Gardener" (C7) refers to a person who tends someone else's yard or property.

42) FRANK. "Butler" (C7) refers to the main servant in a household.

43) FRANK. "Executive dining room" (C7) refers to an exclusive place for upper management.

44) FRANK. "Kibble" (C7) refers to dog food.

45) HENRY. "Profession" (C7) refers to an avocation that requires rigorous training.

46) HENRY. Frank. "Obligated" (C7) refers to being indebted to person or, in Frank's case, an organization.

47) HENRY . "Chauffeur" (C8) refers to a person who drives others around for a living.

48) HENRY . "Bulldoze" (C8) refers to intimidating others.

49) TAPE. "Live. Breathe. Live." (C8) These commands reflect relaxation techniques.

B. Choice of Phrase and Sentence Structure

The tape, which is interpreted as three statuesque muses, speaks in consolatory tones, which contrasts with the competitive repartee. The realistic and combative conversation of the three main character acts as a counterpoint to the surrealism of the soft self-help tape. The result is sharp versus soft, the jostling competitiveness of the guys versus the feminine, nurturing comfort of the tape/muses. The juxtaposition of the two moods creates a syncopated rhythm. Just when you think you can relax, the chaos of everyday life interrupts utopia.

C. Choice of Images

1)

Character description. "Type A" (Wlodarczyk C2)

The audience should envision Henry in his everyday "Type A" habits: rising early, eating breakfast alone since he is in the middle of a divorce, leaving for work so he will be on time. In addition, viewers should see him at work, accepting leadership positions and responsibility whenever possible, which has allowed him to advance faster than Frank and Watson.

2)

Character description. "Corporate soldier" (Wlodarczyk C2)

The audience should imagine Henry, a person with a deep sense of duty and honor in his work and is adept at maneuvering the business world. The image is of Henry confidently handling himself at the office, with a drive and aggressive grace that allows him to move through the corporate environment faster than Watson.

3)

Character description. "Corporate drone" (Wlodarczyk C2)

The audience should see Frank trying to get through the day at the office as painlessly as possible. He knows he will not be there long, so he is marking time until he moves on to what he wants to do. He is not a rebellious person at work, but he is not engaged in his work the way attentive Henry is.

4)

Character description. "Sidekick" (Wlodarczyk C2)

The audience should imagine Frank as loyal follower of Henry. Frank likely often takes Henry's advice and does what Henry wants. At work, Henry tells Frank what to do. Henry berates Frank when he states, "I always cover for you. I always make excuses for you. You don't care. You don't try. Watson is boring, but at least he tries. He cares about his work" (Wlodarczyk C7).

5)

FRANK. "Espresso into my veins" "Coffee enema" (Wlodarczyk C3)

The audience should see Frank trying to wake up in the morning. Judging by his grumbling about the early hour, he is not a morning person. This may be related to the fact that he dreads going to work, the way some children dread going to school.

6)

HENRY. "California" (Wlodarczyk C3)

Through the eyes of the characters, the audience should see the state of California as a *state of mind.* The image of California denotes a relaxed and sometimes eccentric society in which new and unusual trends begin and spread to the rest of the United States.

7)

FRANK. "Stupid detox diet" "Herbal" (Wlodarczyk C3)

HENRY. "Little Miss Detox" (Wlodarczyk C3)

The audience should imagine Frank with his girlfriend, seeing him listening to her talk about her diet and perhaps lecture him about his diet. Since it is a "detox", Frank probably witnesses her taking some kind of natural supplement or unusual mixture. Judging by his description of "stupid", he disapproves.

8)

HENRY. "Marketing recycling what people forgot about five minutes ago" (Wlodarczyk C3)

The audience should picture the Frank and his girlfriend seeing the advertisement and reading the packaging for Frank's girlfriend's diet. Frank is skeptical, but the

girlfriend buys into the marketing. Henry, who is confident in his business acumen, believes he is too smart to be taken in by ads or media.

9)

HENRY. "Gold card" (Wlodarczyk C3)

The audience should envision Henry's financial success, which has allowed him to have a certain privileged level of credit card— a gold card. He does not have a platinum card, but he probably will soon.

10)

HENRY. "'the kid'" "loving father" (Wlodarczyk C3-C4)

The audience should visualize Henry in his conflicted home, trying to be a good father while he and his wife are in the slow devolution of their marriage. While on the phone with his attorney, he finds out during his morning commute that his wife is demanding full custody.

11)

HENRY. She wants the kid too? (Beat.) I know. I will remember not to refer to my son in court as "the kid" (Wlodarczyk C4).

FRANK. "Tie this thing up" (Wlodarczyk C4)

Frank is thinking about marrying his girlfriend, who is becoming obsessed with her job. The audience should see Frank spending domestic and social time with his girlfriend. The image is of Frank and his girlfriend, only known in the script as "Little Miss Detox", nesting and transitioning from a dating couple to one that engages in activities that a cohabitating couple would: grocery shopping, discussing the bills and negotiating over life choices.

11)

FRANK. "You could piss off Mother Teresa" (Wlodarczyk C4)

The audience should visualize the contrast between vigorous Henry and Mother Teresa's compassionate reputation, based on the way she spent her life helping the needy. Henry is a bold man with expansive ideas about his future and has little patience for those who do not share his ideals.

12)

HENRY. "She's into psychology" (Wlodarczyk C4)

FRANK. " From one box to another" (Wlodarczyk C5)

The audience should see restless Henry as jumping from the wife he is divorcing to his new mistress, Sharon, who is the ostensibly the owner of the self-help tape. Frank chides Henry for transitioning from one constricting relationship to another. Furthermore, the audience should see the influence that this "new one", this new girlfriend, has on Henry. Henry uses Sharon's interest in self-improvement and emotional balance as an excuse to listen to the tape, but he is searching for way to feel better about himself. He is seeking a person or place that makes him feel safe.

13)

Frank. "I got a job as a bartender" (Wlodarczyk C5)

Henry. "Buddha with a cocktail mixer" (Wlodarczyk C6)

The audience should see Frank preparing for his new career as a bartender, doing activities such as reading about bartending, practicing mixing drinks for his girlfriend, and perhaps even taking an evening course. This enterprise makes Frank feel happy, fulfilled and relaxed, which is why Henry calls him "Buddha with a cocktail mixer".

14)

Henry. "A bartender? You're gonna finish the presentation" (Wlodarczyk C5)

The audience should see Frank doing his work on the presentation, while delegating some of the work to Watson. The image is one of Frank drudging through tasks that dishearten him. The counter image is Frank applying for the bartending job and being accepted, which mitigates his perpetual ennui.

15)

Frank. "Are you seeing a shrink too?" (Wlodarczyk C6)

There is no proof that Henry has seen a psychologist, but the self-help tape in the car displays Henry's interest in self-improvement and at least a private recognition of his own limitations. Frank picks up on this vulnerability and mocks his competitive friend.

16)

Watson. "We are all replaceable, including me." (Wlodarczyk C6)

The audience should see Watson in his everyday office life, performing humdrum tasks he knows other people could easily perform. Over the years, his responsibility has grown, as indicated by the fact that he gets Frank's job when he quits. He never forgets, however, that he must perseveringly perform to maintain his position. He does not take success for granted.

17)

> Frank. "If you didn't have alimony to pay soon, you would run." (Wlodarczyk C7)

The audience should picture Henry in the midst of acrimonious divorce negotiations, which include feuding over finances and custody of his son. This abrupt trauma motivates him to seek comfort from a soothing self-help tape.

18)

> Watson. "Ten. I started in the mailroom." (Wlodarczyk C7)

The audience should imagine the decade Watson has spent working for his current employer, beginning with the entry level grind of sorting and delivering mail. The audience should further picture Watson being promoted incrementally as the years pass. Watson has been at the company six years longer than Henry's four-year tenure, but Henry has forged his way through the ranks with greater alacrity than patient and submissive Watson.

19)

> Frank. "…you're a sharecropper. You're a gardener. You're a butler. You eat in the executive dining room once a year and get kibble the rest of the year." (Wlodarczyk C7)

The audience should see Henry receiving honors at work, which are momentous to Henry but are negligible tokens to Frank. The audience should see Henry driving himself at work to satiate his drive to achieve. Henry enjoys these occasional perks at work and is offended that Frank does not respect his achievements.

20)

Henry. "It is better than working at a bar." (Wlodarczyk C7)

The audience should see Frank at the office, getting through the day with more frustration than satisfaction. The audience should see Frank doing mundane and routine tasks in the office, moving though the day with placid tolerance.

21)

Frank. "I put in my notice yesterday." (Wlodarczyk C5)

Henry. "You gave two weeks notice. You're obligated." (Wlodarczyk C7)

The audience should imagine Frank telling his supervisors that he is quitting, providing the quotidian two weeks notice. Then audience should feel Frank's relief in this pivotal decision.

22)

Henry. "Watson get in the front seat. I'm not a chauffeur."

(Wlodarczyk C8)

The audience should imagine all of the mornings Watson spent sitting in the backseat, being taken for granted by Henry and Frank. Watson's promotion in the car and at work happens when Frank gives up the front seat.

The audience should also see Henry driving everyday, like a "chauffer", seeing it as a favor to his colleagues. Henry, however, likes to dominate the people around him and would not be a good passenger.

23)

TAPE. "This is a good day. Today is the best day of your life."

(Wlodarczyk C8)

The audience should imagine the time Henry spends alone in the car, listening to the self-help tape when he feels securely alone. Even if his new girlfriend did leave the tape in his car, Henry is actively and regularly listening to the tape to ease his nerves, which are taxed by a divorce and the stress he accepts from workplace.

24)

Henry. "Left turns. Why is everything a left turn?" (Wlodarczyk C8)

The audience should imagine Henry always trying to be conqueror of his problems— in this case, morning rush hour and other drivers who feel the same way. Being a mere mortal, however, events do not always work in his favor and this agitates the perfectionist in Henry. After all of his frustrations, the difficult left turn on the road causes Henry's emotions to explode in road rage.

D. Choice of Peculiar Characteristics I.E. Dialects

1)

The contrast of the impersonal tape, interpreted as surrealistic statues, and its tranquil one-way dialogue is noteworthy in understanding Henry. The tape speaks and does not expect a reply. The tape makes no demands on Henry, except that he listens. Listening is one skill accomplished Henry has not mastered, but he is still as a child listening to a maternal voice when the tape speaks to him. He begins his commute with the verbal balm of the tape.

HENRY. Get off the road if you can't drive. Why don't you signal? If you're gonna turn, put on the blinkers, lady. Is the entire world asleep? I'm trying to get to work. Come on people! Let's go! (HENRY puts on the tape and tries to relax.)

TAPE. Today is a good day. Today is a good day. Everyday brings new opportunities and victories. I welcome— (HENRY stops the tape before stopping the car to pick up Frank.) (Wlodarczyk C3)

The tape is also an inanimate object which he can turn off when he wishes. Even though Henry derives comfort from the tape, it is not a relationship. Lately, his live human relationships have not been as intact as his interaction with the self-help tape.

2)

The detached pattern of communication between Henry, Frank, and Watson, which is partially due to Henry's focus on driving the car, is the foundation of the conversation of *Intersection*. The character's visual attention is attenuated to the highway and the sea of fellow commuters in front of them. This means that as they speak to each other, they do not *have* to look at each other, which contributes to the detached nature of their confrontational dialogue. Perhaps they are able to be verbally more aggressive with one another because there is less eye contact than if they were sitting at a table together.

E. The Sound of the Dialogue

Hierarchy matters in *Intersection.* The sound of the dialogue is determined by the categorical judgments the character make: busboy, monk, sharecropper, gardener, butler and other epithets. The dialogue between Henry, Frank, and Watson is vertical in the sense that the interactions change their hierarchical position; *Intersection* is a masculine,

middle-class play and the action that occurs is based on who is where on the totem pole of unforgiving categories.

The empyrean and undemanding comfort of the tape contradicts the sharp conversation of the guys. Listening to the tape is like listening to a commercial. Henry does not have to answer back; he only needs to follow the instructions. The voice of the tape is also unreal, while the often abusive dialogue between the characters is real enough to be painful.

F. Structure of Lines and Speeches

The sublime and encouraging smoothness of the tape contrasts with the agitated dialogue of Henry, Frank and Watson as well as the car crash at the end of the play. The structure is always sharp versus soft, fast speech versus calming affirmations.

> HENRY. —unless you're trying to get rid of her by disappointing her.
>
> Passive aggressive. That's it.
>
> FRANK. You are listening to this. (FRANK plays the tape)
>
> TAPE. You are a good person. Forgive yourself for—
>
> HENRY. Shut it off. Shut up. (Wlodarczyk C6)

III. Dramatic Action

A.

Unit #1— Henry starts the day with road rage and positive affirmations.

Unit #2— Frank and Henry catch up on personal business.

Unit #3— Henry argues over his divorce.

Unit #4— Frank discusses marrying his girlfriend.

Unit #5— Frank discovers the self-help tape and learns of Henry's new girlfriend.

Unit #6— Watson enters and Henry and Frank argue over life goals.

Unit #7— Watson asserts himself.

Unit #8— Frank leaves and Watson ascends to his new position.

Unit #9— Henry is alone in the car, listening to his tape when he gets in a car crash.

B. Detailed Breakdown of the Action

See "Director's Notebook".

C.

Unit #1— Henry starts the day with road rage and positive affirmations.

Henry starts his day ready to go, but the heavy traffic stalls him. He listens to a self-help tape to counter his vexation. He turns off the tape before his friend enters the car.

Unit #2— Frank and Henry catch up on personal business.

Frank and Henry exchange greetings. Frank complains about his girlfriend, "Little Miss Detox", and her new job and her new healthy habits.

Unit #3— Henry bickers over his divorce with his lawyer.

Henry argues with his lawyer about the divorce, and he tries to apologize for being so aggressive.

Unit #4— Frank discusses marrying his girlfriend.

Frank deliberates over marrying his girlfriend. Henry discourages him by using his own divorce as an example of what can go wrong. Frank thinks that Henry could not get along with any woman for long.

Unit #5— Frank discovers the self-help tape and learns of Henry's new girlfriend.

Frank ridicules Henry for needing the self-help tape, while Henry tries to appear self-sufficient. Frank also scorns Henry for claiming to be in control of his relationships with women, when he is already influence by a mistress who is supposedly a "temporary thing".

Unit #6— Watson enters and Henry and Frank argue over life goals.

Henry deprecates Frank's major career change from corporate worker to bartender. Henry exerts his last remnant of control over Frank through Henry's supervision of presentation at work. Watson, as usual, barely participates in the conversation.

Unit #7— Watson asserts himself

Watson stands up for himself and insists that Henry and Frank call him "Joe". Frank perseveres in defending his new career choice and warns Henry that he is more dispensable than he thinks.

Unit #8— Frank leaves and Watson ascends to his new position.

Frank deserts Henry and his office job, probably altering their friendship forever. Watson proudly takes on his new role with his new responsibilities and increased respect from Henry.

Unit #9— Henry is alone in the car, listening to his tape when he gets in a car crash.

Henry takes a moment alone in the car to adjust to being deserted by Frank. As he drives, he listens to the tape, yells at the other drivers and gets into an auto accident.

IV. Character

A. Character Name— Henry

1. Desire

Henry desires to win in all occasions. It is important for Henry to be noticed and admired. His status at work is central to his identity. Frank attempts to shatter Henry's idea:

> FRANK. I'm only making the point that you think you matter there, but you're a sharecropper. You're a gardener. You're a butler. You eat in the executive dining room once a year and get kibble the rest of the year
>
> HENRY. At least it is a profession with possibility.
>
> FRANK. The possibility that you will be one day older tomorrow… another day older the next day. You will have exchanged bits of your life for security. (Wlodarczyk C7)

2. Will

Henry is single-minded in his attainment of his goals. Even when he is frustrated, he persists. He is privately aware of his weaknesses, which why he listens to the self-help tape to improve himself and his performance.

> TAPE. This is a good day. Today is the best day of your life. Live as is this is your last day. Live. Breathe. Live.
>
> HENRY. *(Yelling at the other drivers while the tape plays.)* Watch where your going! Left turns. Why is everything a left turn? (Wlodarczyk C8)

3. Moral Stance

Henry's sense of morality is bound with his relentless work ethic. Henry tells Frank, "I have been there four years and have been promoted six times. I always cover for you. I always make excuses for you. You don't care. You don't try. Watson is boring, but he tries. He cares about his work" (Wlodarczyk C7). He sees his forceful efforts at the office as evidence of his personal goodness.

4. Decorum

Henry understands business etiquette and politics better than most of his colleagues. Henry easily dances up the corporate ladder without showing his weaknesses. As capable as Henry is, he can be abrasive with those who are close to him. When Henry is discouraging his good friend Frank from marriage, easygoing Frank says to Henry, "You could piss off Mother Theresa" (Wlodarczyk C6). Henry is in the middle of an acrimonious divorce, but he knows his intense temperament well enough to have his attorney do the negotiating. While Henry is driving, his attorney calls him.

> HENRY. *(His cell phone rings)* Yeah? *(Beat.)* What now? *(Beat.)* What now? She spends eight and half years wearing out my gold card and she

> wants more? *(Beat.)* She wants the kid too? *(Beat.)* I know. I will remember not to refer to my son in court as "the kid". *(Beat.)* I am a loving father, damn it. *(Beat.)* You know what I mean. *(Beat.)* Do something useful, besides drain my bank account. Just kidding—mostly kidding. No hard feelings. *(Beat.)* Just wrap it up. Finish. Bye. *(He hangs up.)* (Wlodarczyk C3-C4)

He wants to be a caring father, but feels inept. In an angry outburst he shows his frustration over possibly losing his son and the painful rejection of divorce. Henry vacillates between cool business decorum and private, unguarded frustration.

5. Adjectives

Intelligent
Cunning
Successful
Auspicious
Aggressive

B. Character Name— Frank

1. Desire

Frank desires to live his version of an authentic life. He has been working in a corporate job in which he is dolorous. Every day he works at the unnamed company, he fades a little more. In addition, his career-oriented girlfriend grows more distant as Frank considers marriage.

> HENRY. How is she?
>
> FRANK. Who?
>
> HENRY. Little Miss Detox.

FRANK. Good. OK. She has a new job… always on the phone… always something to fix… meeting… She's totally into her job… never before seen her so career minded.

HENRY. Yeah?

FRANK. Maybe it's time. Maybe I should tie this thing up. (Wlodarczyk C3-C4)

2. Will

Frank is resolute in his choice to make a life change. He takes a great risk in leaving a stable corporate job to become a bartender to obtain a more fulfilling life than he presently lives. This decision is purposeful. He explains to Henry:

FRANK. I put in my notice yesterday.

HENRY. Notice?

FRANK. I'm quitting.

HENRY. For what? What are you gonna do?

FRANK. I got a job as a bartender.

HENRY. You're gonna lose money, right?

FRANK. Not as much as you think. I never made as much as you. (Wlodarczyk C5)

3. Moral Stance

Frank's sense of morality demands honest and principled living. This translates into his choice of choosing a job that gives him satisfaction rather than status; he is being true to himself. Continuing in the office job that makes him miserable would be an immoral choice to Frank.

4. Decorum

Frank's sense of decorum is bound up with his morality. He is honor-bound to speak honestly to Henry about serious matters, even though Henry does not want to hear what Frank has to say. Although laidback, he is forthright when his principles are challenged. After enduring insults from an angry Frank, he ripostes in the following comment.

> FRANK. I'm only making the point that you think you matter there, but you're a sharecropper. You're a gardener. You're a butler. You eat in the executive dining room once a year and get kibble the rest of the year. (Wlodarczyk C7)

5. Adjectives

Reflective
Conciliatory
Amiable
Sincere
Visionary

C. Character Name— Watson

1. Desire

Watson desires to be recognized. Frank and Henry have both nicknamed him "Watson" against his will. Morning after morning, Frank and Henry take Watson for granted on the commute to work. Note the following sarcastic interchange.

> HENRY. Watson, say something. Every morning, you sit there like a monk. What is it you do?
>
> WATSON. When Frank goes, I'll have his job. I'll be working with you.
>
> FRANK. They replaced me with you? They replaced me with Watson?

WATSON. Jo. My first name is JoE.

HENRY. I've never heard your name before—

WATSON. I told you last week, last month, when we first met. You never remember names. That's why you lost the Reynold's account.

(Wlodarczyk C6)

2. Will

Watson has a tremendous capacity for endurance. Socially, Henry and Frank rarely refer to him or engage him in their conversation. This is more than an oversight; it is disrespect. When Frank hears that Watson will take his job, Frank is insulted. Frank objects, "They replaced me with Watson?" Watson, with the patience of the proverbial tortoise in the race against the presumptuous hare, knows if he waits and works long enough, triumph will be his (Wlodarczyk C6).

3. Moral Stance

Watson is responsible at work, which is proven by how Frank and Henry depend on him for his participation in their work projects, even if they do not acknowledge his contribution. The following conversation shows his reliability.

HENRY. A bartender? You're gonna finish the presentation.

FRANK. Yeah.

HENRY. *(To Frank)* You have the new numbers?

FRANK. *(To Watson)* You have the new numbers?

WATSON. *(To Frank)* Yeah.

FRANK. *(To Henry)* Yeah. I have the numbers. (Wlodarczyk C5-C6)

4. Decorum

Watson posses more phlegmatic grace that the other two characters. His *silence* shows his unwillingness to be rude and antagonistic, unless provoked beyond evenhanded limits.

5. Adjectives

Passive
Patient
Underappreciated
Persevering
Smug

V. Ideas

A. Meaning of Title

The meaning of the title *Intersection* is that in life we are forced to interact in the detached labyrinth of modern life. In these interactions we must negotiate our place in the food chain. We must make peace with ourselves and the environment around us, often find ourselves dealing with major decisions at the "intersections" of life.

B. Philosophical Statements in the Play

1) TAPE. "Today will be a good day. Today, the universe works with me for my success." (Wlodarczyk C4)

TAPE. "live as if this were your last day. Live as if this were your last on earth… Live…" (Wlodarczyk C8)

The tape's statement reflects our society's penchant for inspirational guidance as a solution to problems ranging from minutiae to internal despair. Henry is participating in popular marketing trend without admitting it.

2) Henry. "Left turns. Why is everything a left turn?" (Wlodarczyk C8)

Henry tries to fight the entropy of life, but he can not control every aspect of life no matter how vigilant he is. The meaning of the left turn is that life often resists a person's desires and that people must persist despite these impediments.

C. Symbolism

1)

> FRANK. I'm only making the point that you think you matter there, but you're a sharecropper. You're a gardener. You're a butler. You eat in the executive dining room once a year and get kibble the rest of the year. (Wlodarczyk C7)

Frank tells Henry and the audience to truth that people try and try and build up a life that satisfies them. No matter how much a person accomplishes, they are living on borrowed time. Frank is talking about the company, but his statement applies to life. What a person builds usually passes away with their physical body.

2)

> HENRY. You don't know Sharon. She's not a wife. She's temporary thing. (Wlodarczyk C5)

This statement symbolizes how Henry views many of the people in his life, as temporary benefactors who owe him support and loyalty. Henry, however does not reciprocate. Sharon is temporary mistress to help him get through the divorce. Other people serve a similar function in his life: providing benefit without any emotional sacrifice on Henry's part.

3)

> HENRY. Is the entire world asleep? I'm trying to get to work. Come on people! Let's go. (Wlodarczyk C3)

Henry is talking about traffic, but the question "Is the entire world asleep?" is a valid one. In the process of survival, it is easier to focus on the commute and not the reason a person is going in that particular direction in their life. The intention of the line is to ask the audience, "Are you asleep?"