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Anna Wiśniewska-Grabarczyk\*

## Theatre and Drama of Socialist Realism in the Context of Cryptotexts (Based on MKiS and WUKPPiW Material)

The goal of the article is to discuss cryptotexts<sup>1</sup> created in Poland during Socialist realism. The study covers documents developed by the Ministry of Culture and Arts (MKiS) and the Voivodship Control Bureau for Press, Publications and Performances (WUKPPiW) in Poznań in 1949–54 discussing the methods of on-stage fulfilment of plays and dramatic works designed for younger audiences.

### Polish literature in the context of cryptotexts<sup>2</sup>

In the People's Republic, all cultural texts<sup>3</sup> which were to be released into official circulation<sup>4</sup> were evaluated by state officers. In the majority of cases they were secret in nature and had an intentionally limited distribution which is why

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\* Mgr, e-mail: [psiutanka@poczta.onet.pl](mailto:psiutanka@poczta.onet.pl), Chair of Polish Literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Institute of Polish Philology, Faculty of Philology, University of Lodz, 90-236 Łódź, ul. Pomorska 171/173.

<sup>1</sup> Cryptotexts are defined as secret texts with deliberately limited circulation. I offer a more extensive characterisation of this type of work in an article entitled *Recenzja cenzorska Polski Ludowej*, "Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich" 2016, issue 59 (117), vol. 1, pp. 97–103; cf. also footnote 5. The definition of censorship review is given in my article *Segment streszczający recenzji cenzorskiej (na materiale GUKPPiW z roku 1950)*, "Socjolingwistyka" 2016, issue 1 (30), pp. 278–288.

<sup>2</sup> The title of this chapter refers to the classic text by Ryszard Nycz entitled *Literatura polska w cieniu cenzury* [Polish literature in the shadow of censorship], "Teksty Drugie" 1998, issue 3 (51), p. 6–27. Nycz discussed Polish literature, which "almost from the beginning was accompanied by the more or less vigilant eye of the church or state censor" (p. 6), by analysing overt texts indicating, e.g. "various strategies of literary Aesopian language" in books published in official as well as independent circulation. In the article, I propose that version of censorship studies in which the focal point is shifted to cryptotexts. "The shedding of light" on secret texts offers a better understanding of, on the one hand, systemic mechanisms of control of expression and the methods of constructing that kind of "allegorical code in which the layer of figurative meanings is to form a type of tight cover of the message hidden from the censor" (p. 10) on the other.

<sup>3</sup> State control applied to the press, radio and television programs as well as film productions and even maps and musical notations.

<sup>4</sup> The second circulation (independent) was established in Poland in 1976 and its main goal was to weaken (break) the state monopoly of information through publications issued outside of

they can be classified as so-called cryptotexts. In this article, I discuss two types of secret texts: reviews developed at MKiS (without a separate name) and reviews developed at WUKPPiW, the so-called censor reviews. Even though both formats specified were distinguishable from overt reviews published in the press<sup>5</sup>, it would be futile to seek a definition of those in any dictionary of literary terms or other lexicon- or encyclopaedia-type collections<sup>6</sup>. This is most surprising in the case of censor reviews, which constituted a specific document of the epoch which has not been replicated in any form in democratic systems<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, censor evaluations were a result of the activity of the censorship bureau – an institution responsible for regulating freedom of speech, constituting a machine of prevention and repression no longer in force today.

In order to fill that gap I proposed the following definition of a censor review, which I will use herein:

a review by a censor of the People's Republic of Poland was a cryptotext (secret text with intentionally limited distribution), sanctioned by the state machine, discussing and evaluating cultural texts (works of literature, theatre, film, etc.), created by the Main Office for the Control of for Press, Publications and Performances officers (since 1981 the Main Office for the Control of Publications and Performances) and field divisions in 1944–1990, usually on a specific form<sup>8</sup>.

Stage performances were also subject to the above-mentioned process of control. Interventions were made first when approving a theatre's annual repertoire by a special unit of the General Directorate of Theatres, Operas and Philharmon-

censorship (the so-called “**independent publications**”, “**bibuła**” [tissue paper], “**non-permitted publications**”, “publications of the democratic opposition”). Underground periodicals, ephemera and brochures and books issued in 1944–1953 are considered as predecessors of the second circulation. About the second circulation cf. e.g.: W. Chojnacki and W. Chojnacki [pseud. J. Kamińska], *Bibliografia publikacji podziemnych w Polsce 13 XII 1981–VI 1986*, Editions Spotkania, Paris 1988; W. Chojnacki, M. Jastrzębski, *Bibliografia publikacji podziemnych w Polsce 1 I 1986–31 XII 1987*, Editions Spotkania, Warsaw [no editorial details].

<sup>5</sup> Its main distinguishing features included: the secret nature of reviews and the need to issue the decision about the publication or halting the work (in the case of any doubts, censors could seek the opinion of their colleagues or supervisors, but eventually the form had to include a statement whether a given book was permitted for printing or halted).

<sup>6</sup> If they were mentioned, it meant they were related to literary or publisher reviews.

<sup>7</sup> During the interwar period, there existed repression censorship.

<sup>8</sup> A. Wiśniewska-Grabarczyk, *Segment streszczający recenzji cenzorskiej (na materiale GUKPPiW z roku 1950)*, “Socjolingwistyka” 2016, issue 1 (30), pp. 278. I presented the first proposed definition of a censor review in, currently being prepared for publication, my diploma dissertation entitled *Czytelnik ocenizowany. Literatura w paratekstach – recenzjach cenzorskich okresu stalinizmu (na materiale GUKPPiW z roku 1950)* [Censored *Czytelnik*. Literature in paratexts – censor reviews from the Stalinist period (based on GUKPPiW material from 1950)].

ics (GDTOF). Of course, individual plays were also evaluated, which is confirmed by reviews preserved in archival material of the GUKPPiW and MKiS<sup>9</sup>. The folders could have also included “cards of books submitted for publications” and in some cases correspondence to and from the artists, quite surprising at times:

I am extremely sorry that the Department of Creativity received from me such a terrible typescript of *Biale Siostry*. It was my secretary’s fault, who sent an uncorrected copy, but also partly the fault of the Paper Matters Commission, which holds 2 copies of *Biale Siostry*. Those have been verified by the Polish Writers’ Union (ZLP) and censored by the Voivodship Division of the Control of Press in Katowice and should be free of any glaring mistakes<sup>10</sup>.

### Theatre and drama in Socialist realism<sup>11</sup>

The turn of the 1950s was undoubtedly a tumultuous period in Polish culture. In January 1949, during the Szczecin convention, the fate of Polish literature was decided upon and less than six months later in Obory (near Warsaw) the shape of the new Polish theatre was discussed by delegates to a meeting of playwrights and critics and other people associated with theatre<sup>12</sup>. Among the large group of initiatives important for domestic drama the most significant included the guest performance of the Moscow Drama Theatre under the direction of Nikolay Okhlopkov and the Festival of Russian and Soviet Plays – with both events clearly stating the cultural source from which Polish culture should draw. Also, the administrative structures were subject to changes. In April 1949, the last convention of the Association of Artists of Polish Stages (ZASP) was held and in September the authorities established the Central Directorate for

<sup>9</sup> It was sometimes the case that the Censorship Bureau sent texts for evaluation to MKiS, cf. e.g. a review of a novel by Nikodem Kłosowski entitled *Skarb*: section 6 of the review form read: “Sent from G.U.K.P”. (AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination).

<sup>10</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From the correspondence with Roman Juraszek, the author of *Biale Siostry* (31 Oct 1949). The fragment presented consecutive stages of reviewing a work. Usually, those letters were more brief, cf. e.g. “I am submitting the typescript of my work entitled *Sztuka religijna w dawnych wiekach* for evaluation. My possible publisher shall send a corresponding formal application soon” (AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From the correspondence with Karol Korsak, the author of *Sztuka religijna w dawnych wiekach* (14 Jul 1949).

<sup>11</sup> Theatre and drama in Socialist realism had a rich subject literature, cf. e.g.: numerous works by Stanisław Marczak-Oborski, a renowned specialists in the area.

<sup>12</sup> The proceedings which resulted in the proclamation of Socialist realism were held between 18 and 19 June 1949.

Theatres, Operas and Philharmonics, the predecessor of GDTOF, and the Central Theatre Management<sup>13</sup>. The intensifying process of nationalisation of Polish theatres was concluded on 21 December 1949<sup>14</sup>.

The newly-established theatres<sup>15</sup> as well as those rebuilding after the destruction of WWII<sup>16</sup> started implementing the stipulations of the only valid movement, Socialist realism. It did not take long for the implementation of the new creative method to bear effects. Socialist realism soon dominated repertoires; “production plays” were staged in Łódź, Warsaw, Krakow, Bydgoszcz and in many other theatres throughout Poland. The creators were expected to ensure: certain types of characters, with a clear dichotomous division between good and evil characters with an outstanding and positive protagonist worth emulating and a completely opposite antagonist, along with a communicative quality of language (any formal experiments were prohibited), and an optimistic undertone

GUKPPiW, WUKPPiW and MKiS officers evaluated a given work in terms of its compliance with the Socialist realist program. Within the discussed period only in some rare reviews was the evaluation of artistic value not derived from the evaluation of the ideological value.

**“Amateur theatres have a huge significance in building: the present and the future[...]”<sup>17</sup> – handbooks for theatres in the context of cryptotexts**

According to the guidelines of the cultural policy of the 1950s, a large emphasis was placed on promoting and propagating culture, including easier access to performing arts, which resulted in the creation of a network of theatres. Particular attention was applied to rural communities and smaller townships establishing not only multi-stage centres but also more modest stationary or travelling insti-

<sup>13</sup> Vide J. of L. O.G. 1949 No. 77 Item 955, the Order of the Minister of Culture and Arts of 8 September 1949 on the creation of a state company under the name of the Central Directorate for Theatres, Operas and Philharmonics; <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WMP19490770955+1950%2403%2401&min=1> [accessed on: 1.05.2016]; J. of L. O.G. 1950 No. 79 Item 926, the Order of the Minister of Culture and Arts of 15 April 1950 regarding the amendment of the Order of 8 September 1949 on the creation of a state company under the name of the Central Directorate for Theatres, Operas and Philharmonics; <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WMP19500790926> [accessed on: 1.05.2016]

<sup>14</sup> The publishing market was also subjected to nationalisation, cf. the difficult history of private publishing houses in post-WWII Poland.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. e.g. 12 Nov 1949, the Teatr Nowy in Łódź was opened.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. e.g. 13 Dec 1949, the rebuilt National Theatre in Warsaw was opened.

<sup>17</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From a review *Repertuar teatrów ochotniczych* by Zdzisław Kwieciński (5 Apr 1949).

tutions. Theatre life occurred in branch theatres and at enterprise or clubroom centres, which had to be managed in an appropriate way, something GUKPPiW, WUKPPiW and MKiS officers were very aware of:

The notion of clubroom theatre has emerged rapidly in today's life. A handbook for a clubroom theatre could provide valuable services both to its manager and the youth participating in the plays<sup>18</sup>.

All types of theatre initiatives began to receive guidebooks and instructions discussing the methods of staging plays, cooperating with actors and the audience and other issues related to the on-stage handling of a dramatic text. These activities were subject to evaluation just as theatre plays.

In November 1949, the authorities released for publication "a practical instruction manual regarding technical issues (partly artistic and teaching as well) for the puppet theatre within the conditions of a voluntary clubroom work"<sup>19</sup> entitled *Teatr Kukielek* by Stanisław Iłowski. The review emphasised a good level of the publication and its educational and instruction value:

It is a handbook developed professionally, comprehensively and with clarity.

It will offer much help for the developing amateur movement in terms of puppet theatres because by offering the most needed practical directions based on professional experience it can save beginners from inevitable mistakes or at least "reinventing the wheel"<sup>20</sup>.

The Socialist realist promotion of utility literature was understandable in the context of the utilitarian goals set for literature (including belles-lettres). Self-study books, guidebooks and instruction-type items were becoming an invaluable instrument used for shaping the expected state of matters. The same applied to instruction manuals for people working with the theatre. By definition a guidebook<sup>21</sup>, required readers to act in a specific manner but a Socialist realist guidebook related to such a sensitive matter as theatre life including the only legitimate model of operation, left the animator of cultural life a minimum space of freedom.

<sup>18</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From a review of *Poradnik dla teatrów świetlicowych* [Handbook for clubroom theatres] by Tadeusz Kudliński and Franciszek Walczewski (27 Apr 1949).

<sup>19</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From a review of *Teatr Kukielek* by Stanisław Iłowski (10 Nov 1949).

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>21</sup> E. Ficek, *Poradnik – gatunek interakcyjny?*, in: *Styl konwersacyjny*, B. Witosz (ed.), Wyd. UŚ, Katowice 2006, pp. 243–251.

Using guidebooks-instruction manuals, the central government equipped the cultural worker with the necessary tools for conducting field operations. Thus, at even smaller cultural centres distant from any decision-making centres, theatre life, shaped according to centrally-approved rules, was flourishing. Literature devoted to managing theatres underwent considerable specialisation and there began to appear on the market items developed for a specific type of institution while authors were expected to know the subject and operate with ease in the new theatre reality:

I do think, though, that the contemporary clubroom theatre is a completely special notion and it requires a special point of view. One has to know for whom the theatre is to be organised and who his authors are. Finally, what is the goal the theatre is to serve. We know far too well that in today's Poland there are no free-range problems which are not associated with the entirety of the notions of the cultural life. The clubroom theatre cannot fulfil the role of a lonely autonomous island within its area escaping the standards of contemporary times but it must be an integral part of these times, its manifestation and a reflection<sup>22</sup>.

Upon delivering such a fiery statement the author of the review proceeded to a detailed (almost 1.5-typescript-page-long) discussion of the guidebook. The accusations included some were considered canonical in 1950s criticism, which constituted a *sine qua non* element of the reviewer and censor's *modus scribendi*: "The authors of the guidebook are so focussed on the religious nature that they associate all folk problems with the problems of Catholic rituals"<sup>23</sup>, "The authors of the guidebook psychologise in a completely uncontrolled way when offering methods of working at clubroom theatres"<sup>24</sup>. Some accusations could had been considered as a justified critical voice, but the structure of the statements and its propagandic undertone revealed the actual intentions of their authors:

When the authors discuss, e.g. on pages 87 and 88 contrast as an element of expression assigning colours some completely extraordinary mystical powers, thus imposing the notions of good, evil, truth, humility, etc., we look in amazement at the colour as anthropomorphised oddities and not as colour blobs indicating the knowledge on painting and using the knowledge of the arts world in the theatre. The same applies to clothing or make-up. Everything that is supposed to be in the theatre a mixture of colour, shapes, light, all merged with the epoch, with the nature of art, what eventually is to become a visible sign of caring about the visual vision of the world – in the

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<sup>22</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From a review of *Poradnik dla teatrów świetlicowych* [Handbook for clubroom theatres] by Tadeusz Kudliński and Franciszek Walczewski (27 Apr 1949).

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem.

case of the authors is a manifestation of higher, irrational forces or at least of human soul hankering for Catholic ideals<sup>25</sup>.

The reviewer's decision seemed settled: "The guidebook's advantage is its clear structure, a certain number of sound technical advice. Being incorrect in terms of principles and train of thought it is not fit for publications"<sup>26</sup>.

### **"The work lacks political instances"<sup>27</sup> – dramatic works for the youngest in the context of cryptotexts**

The fate of post-WWII art for children was discussed, among other places during "the first conference devoted to the development of literature for the youngest generation in the altered social-political conditions of the People's Republic"<sup>28</sup> and during the 1<sup>st</sup> National Convention on Literature for Children and Young Adults in 1947 organised through the initiative of the Polish Teachers' Union<sup>29</sup>. The surviving records indicate that the works for the youngest audiences were subject to similar rules of creation as the works for older audiences. The analysis of cryptotexts shows that the principles of evaluating them were also similar.

During the period of systemic control of speech, the main goal of cryptotexts was to evaluate the ideological correctness of the works submitted for review. This also applied to dramatic works for the youngest audiences. It seems that compliance with the system of beliefs in force was the primary test and only after a work passed it, would the censors approach the remaining aspects of a work. In the review form of MKiS in section 17. *Social and political resonance*, the reviewer of the play by Maria Kownacka entitled *O Żaczku-Szkolaczku i o Sowizdrzale* wrote: "The work lacks any political instances. The play has a positive educational value. It resounds with the joy of life, a positive approach to science and the love of nature"<sup>30</sup>. The short fragment offered a concise summary of the program of Socialist realism. Contact with nature, a common motif in children's

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem. The archive includes two reviews of the guidebook. The first one was developed on 27 Feb 1949 and was positive. However, the decision quoted herein of the second reviewer eventually signed on 9 May 1949 was sustained.

<sup>27</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From a review of a puppet play by Maria Kownacka entitled *O Żaczku-Szkolaczku i o Sowizdrzale* (19 Feb 1949).

<sup>28</sup> S. Frycie, *Literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży w latach 1945–1970. Zarys monograficzny. Materiały. Tom I – Proza*, wyd. 3, WSiP, Warsaw 1987, p. 25.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p. 35.

<sup>30</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From a review of a puppet play by Maria Kownacka entitled *O Żaczku-Szkolaczku i o Sowizdrzale* (19 Feb 1949).

literature, was highly valued by the designers of the movement. The reviewers favourably considered works which presented the beauty of the natural environment and emphasised life in harmony with nature. Rural-themed plays were highly supported by state officials by matching the policy of social promotion from the rural community. Many reviews emphasised the fact that works developed for children's theatres included "people from the rural environment"<sup>31</sup>, often providing specific information regarding the preferred audience: "For children of lower school grades. For the countryside in particular"<sup>32</sup>.

The reviewer's remark on the educational value was also a result of the expectations towards the play. The majority of the analysed reviews raised the educational aspect of the work: "evident educational qualities"<sup>33</sup>. The paideic imperative seemed an indispensable feature of children's and youth literature from the time and place of its origin, though within the discussed period it was mainly a means of repression<sup>34</sup>. The Horatian maxim of "teach through entertaining" gained a completely new meaning in the first decade after WWII. An analysis of cryptotexts of plays devised for the youngest audiences confirmed that the educational function was valued over the poetic function. All proposals raising current themes considered as significant could expect to be favoured:

The author of this little play had high ambitions. On the stage of a puppet theatre, he managed to present a current economic issue. In fact, the entire play is designed to show children the harmfulness of the Colorado potato beetle and encourage them to work together to combat it<sup>35</sup>.

Even if the reviewer questioned the aesthetic value of such a work, it could see the light of day provided that its author complied with the corrections suggested by the reviewer:

One could, of course, hold it against the author of the play that the only problem with the beetle he sees is that there won't be any potatoes for the swine. [...] However,

<sup>31</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From a review of a puppet play by Maria Kownacka entitled *O Kasi, co gąski zgubiła* (29 Feb 1949). The story of *O Zuchu i Smoluchu* is also set in a rural community.

<sup>32</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From a review of a puppet play by Maria Kownacka entitled *O Żaczku-Szcolaczku i o Sowizdrzale* (19 Feb 1949).

<sup>33</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From a review of a play by Maria Kownacka entitled *O straszliwym smoku i dzielnym szewczyku, prześlicznej królownie i królu Gwoździku* (22 Apr 1949).

<sup>34</sup> Suffice to mention the stipulations to shape the positive image of the People's Army and to present the Home Army as an organisation hostile towards Poland.

<sup>35</sup> APP, WUKPPiW, ref. no. 240, l. 181. From a review of a book entitled *O jeżu i lisie szkodniku* (14 Jun 1954).



those reservations are marginal and do not lessen the value and currentness of the little play<sup>36</sup>.

An important issue for the healthcare policy was raised by a play entitled *O Zuchu i Smoluchu*, summarised in a peculiar reviewer's *dictum*: "Cleanliness means health – filth means sickness"<sup>37</sup>. The play reflected the social inequality of the 1950s: in the first decade after WWII, there were very many initiatives aimed at decreasing the chasm between the backward countryside and the developing cities<sup>38</sup>. To promote a hygienic way of life the authorities used information leaflets, posters, bills and, of course, the press and literature. The example of *Zuch i Smoluch* showed that such theatre works raised that essential, though surely not high-quality in literary terms, problem:

Smoluch, the Witch's accomplice, conducts the propaganda of filth. The Witch spreads disease. [...] The book, upon introduction of corrections, is fit for lower grades of primary school of amateur theatre – for official events. It can teach by showing children the ugliness of filth. That was the author's intention. It seems that a more successful method in terms of education would be to show children the nice parts of life, those worth emulating, but Kownacka has done that in her other valuable theatre works for children<sup>39</sup>.

*O Zuchu i Smoluchu* attempted to develop in the youngest consumers of culture the proper habits regarding hygiene. The main goal of (dramatic) works of the Stalinist period was the "development" in the recipients of culturally appropriate attitudes towards particularly important issues from the point of view of state policy. The system legislators intended to equip the young consumers of culture with an appropriate system of beliefs regarding crucial issues, such as class struggle or capitalist exploitation. In that context, Szewczyk [Little Cobbler], the protagonist of yet another play proposed by Maria Kownacka, was interesting. The work's evaluation included accusations regarding the motivation and the psychological credibility of the protagonist, which revealed the expectations the authorities had towards literature:

The unexpected ending – the little cobbler does not want a palace nor a crown – would be more amusing if the little cobbler was politer. The moment, though the humorous

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>37</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From a review of a play by Maria Kownacka entitled *O Zuchu i Smoluchu* (11 Mar 1949).

<sup>38</sup> That dichotomous state of affairs was also reflected in the period literature which developed two trends in the production novel: the urban trend and the rural trend.

<sup>39</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From a review of a play by Maria Kownacka entitled *O Zuchu i Smoluchu* (11 Mar 1949).

nature of the little cobbler's speech, is a bit vulgarised. And the pace with which the princess gives in to the little cobbler's influence – not very credible<sup>40</sup>.

In Socialist realist productions, the aesthetic-ethical parallelism was supplemented with the class component. The characters, if beautiful and virtuous, usually came from an appropriate social group. Therefore, the reviewers and critics proposed a solution where “the trapped princess is saved not by a brave knight but Stach-hutnik [Stach the steelworker]”<sup>41</sup>. In the analysed example, the reviewer noted that the Little Cobbler rejected upper class attributes, though not without damage to the structure of the work.

When evaluating dramatic works reviewers referred to the possibility of staging them, though the analysed collection of texts mainly consisted of laconic remarks in that regard: “**Work written in a light lively mood, with humour, with extensive knowledge of puppet plays and children's psychology**”<sup>42</sup>, “Good dramatic structure. Feel of the stage. Lively action. Good skills in managing the work's trend. Language, presumably because of a rather disgusting topic, deficient”<sup>43</sup>.

In the reviews, the reviewers noted the immanent features of the texts which could had been advantageous or disadvantageous for adapting them for the stage while the evaluations of the possibility of adaptations were often accompanied by evaluations of the artistic value of the dramas:

The topic is more fitting for a talk on hygiene than for a dramatic work. Personification of combs, soap and brushes. Graphicalisation of insects which cause disgust or fear, such as the Cockroach or fly, songs the lyrics of which deal with the parasitic activities of bedbugs, lice, fleas, spreading of bacteria from rubbish cans, “**from manure**” to the tureen – by flies, where there are centipedes, roaches, etc., where there is a pile of rubbish, and a boy is compared to a “scruffy cloth” – it is all valid, true – but in the theatre placed in a graphic form very disgusting and terrible<sup>44</sup>.

The surviving reviews included a few remarks regarding the contemporary theatre life. Almost all confirmed its poor level: “In the generally low level of

<sup>40</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From a review of a play by Maria Kownacka entitled *O straszliwym smoku i dzielnym szewczyku, prześlicznej królownie i królu Gwoździku* (22 Apr 1949).

<sup>41</sup> *Słownik realizmu socjalistycznego*, Z. Łapiński, W. Tomasiak (eds.), TAIWPN Universitas, Cracow 2004, p. 125; W. Grodzieńska, *Współczesna literatura dla dzieci*, “Kuźnica” 1949, issue 51–52.

<sup>42</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From a review of a puppet play by Maria Kownacka entitled *O Kasi, co gąski zgubiła* (29 Feb 1949).

<sup>43</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From a review of a play by Maria Kownacka entitled *O Zuchu i Smoluchu* (11 Mar 1949).

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem.

the repertoires of children's theatre, it is a valuable item which has remained for several years one of the basic plays of the puppet theatre"<sup>45</sup>, "The work deserves to be published and the most extensive propagation as one of the best puppet plays for younger children"<sup>46</sup>, "The work should be published as one of the best plays amongst the generally poor repertoire of children's theatre"<sup>47</sup>.

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The subject literature offers the prevalent opinion that the theatres of the Socialist realism era "suffered one of the most vapid periods in their history"<sup>48</sup>. Polish post-WWII drama did not develop any remarkable works within the first decade. The state covered drama, similarly to other arts, with a careful and educational canvas which did not support creative freedom.

In the article, I proposed to view the Socialist realist theatre not through what was published and staged in theatres but through the evaluations of guide-books regarding on-stage processing of drama works and plays developed for the youngest audiences. The analysis of cryptotexts indicated that the evaluators were predominantly loyal to the system legislators and did not exceed the accepted review trend while the surviving sample copies of plays and the reviews themselves confirm the disputable artistic qualities of drama works of the 1950s. designed for (not exclusively) the youngest audiences.

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<sup>47</sup> AAN, MKiS, Dept. of Art. Creativity, Publishing Div., ref. no. 705, no pagination. From a review of a puppet play by Maria Kownacka entitled *O Żaczku-Szkolaczku i o Sowidrzale* (19 Feb 1949).

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Anna Wiśniewska-Grabarczyk

### **Theatre and Drama of Socialist Realism in the Context of Cryptotexts (Based on MKiS and WUKPPiW Material)**

(Summary)

The main goal of the article is to offer a description of cryptotexts of theatre staging handbooks and dramatic works created in Poland during the socialist realism period. A cryptotext is a secret text which is the result of a purposeful act of subterfuge. In the article, I present selected cryptotexts – reviews produced in the Ministry of Culture and Art (MKiS) and censorship reviews of the dramatic works submitted for evaluation to the Voivodship Control Bureau for Press, Main Office of Control of Press, Publications and Shows (WUKPPiW).

The archives contain evaluation of works which have been published in subsequent years as well as those which remained only in their draft form. Analysis of the evaluations of ministry officials reveal the mechanisms for allowing and withholding submitted dramatic works and a theatre staging handbook which shows the practices of publishing theatrical works.

An analysis of different evaluations of the same text allows for a hypothesis that the main aim of cryptotexts was the evaluation of ideological correctness of submitted works. Despite this main function it is possible to point out specific passages in the statements by the WUKPPiW officials which are similar to statements of Ministry officials. In both cases the evaluation pertains to the content and the planned fulfilment of the work and plays mainly a didactic function.

Keywords: censorship, cryptotext, post-war Polish theatre and drama