Secret theatre

*Off-the-grid performance practices in socialist Poland and Czechoslovakia*

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Chapter 2. Apartment as Heterotopia

- Bulgakov envied nothing, save for a good apartment. (Anatolii Swartz:1988)\(^{165}\)

2.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter addresses those of my case studies whose projects were situated in and integrally linked to urban apartments. These are Theatre on Tarczyńska (Teatr na Tarczyńskiej, 1955–58, Warsaw) with its subsequent reincarnation – Miron Białoszewski's Separate Theatre (Teatr Osobny, 1958–1963, Warsaw) – and Footprint on a Window (Šlépěj v Okně, 1973–1975, Brno). The analysis here revolves around Lefebvre's notion of the spatial triad along with Foucault's notion of heterotopia and focuses on the relationship between the physical/ideological space of the apartment and its imagined (in Lefebvre's words – social) aspect. According to Lefebvre, these three spatial aspects or layers exist in an interplay and together produce what we perceive as space. Via an examination of how my case studies engaged with the physical and ideological layers of apartments, I arrive at an interpenetration of how these projects altered the imagined dimension. In order to achieve this, I first discuss apartments in more general terms and then introduce my case studies, followed by a chapter conclusion.

In his *Poetics of Space* (1958), Gaston Bachelard writes that “[a] house constitutes a body of images that give” humankind “proofs or illusions of stability”\(^{166}\) because a house “is imagined as a vertical being” and “as a concentrated being. It appeals to our consciousness of centrality.”\(^{167}\) In contrast, an urban apartment complex, to Bachelard, presents a set of “superimposed boxes” that “have no roots.”\(^{168}\) Citing Paul Claudel, Bachelard calls apartments “conventional holes”\(^{169}\) and states that “[h]ome has become mere horizontality” and “...a house in a big city lacks cosmicity.”\(^{170}\) Allow me to disagree. French philosopher's distaste for urban homes aside, an apartment, in opposition to the house's “centrality” presents an entirely different complex, multidimensional and many-layered blend of concepts. Despite being similar to the house as another type of human dwelling, the apartment is somewhat of a paradox – a self-contained unit, yet one embedded within countless blended networks, both material and imaginary. This blend goes a long way in structuring the self-identity, the choices and the relationships of apartment dwellers to other people, objects and reality as a whole. However, the effect of the apartment blend on its inhabitants is far from direct and one-way (as the Soviet governments imagined it when they drafted housing policies in the hopes that, for instance, communal housing will eradicate the need for private property). Rather, the relationship between home and human is a symbiosis of the two, with the addition of many more elements. Apartments have been affected by historical flux, as have humans. These changes, as this chapter demonstrates, have in turn affected the inhabitants of the apartments.

\(^{165}\) Ничему не завидел Булгаков, квартире хорошей.
\(^{166}\) Bachelard:1958, 17
\(^{167}\) ibid
\(^{168}\) Bachelard:1958, 26-27
\(^{169}\) ibid
\(^{170}\) ibid
During the period with which this study is concerned, apartments in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc were frequently and consciously used to navigate – with varying degrees of success – the formation of the so-called “communal bodies,” or Socialism-minded citizens with personality traits deemed to be positive in the context of Marxist/Leninist ideology (for instance, a collective spirit). On occasion, though, apartments also served as venues for what Alexei Yurchak calls places of "vnenahodimost" and Michel Foucault - heterotopias (both terms are addressed in this and earlier chapters and are loosely defined as “spaces of otherness,” although there is a distinction between the two). In other words, apartments were called upon to expose and hide, manipulate and protect, and uphold ideological ideals or bypass (or dismantle) them.

2.2 The Non-Narrative Self at Home (the apartment blend)

To Lefebvre, a domestic space such as an apartment is “lived – not represented (or conceived)...compared with the abstract spaces of the experts (architects, urbanists, planners), the space of the everyday activities...is a concrete one, which is to say, subjective.” This subjectivity can be interpreted in other ways, which I discuss below, and is of central importance for the subsequent interpretation of undertakings such as Theatre on Tarczyńska. In this case, I take subjectivity to mean self-identity and, in relation to home, the non-narrative identity discussed in some detail in the Introduction to this study (and further below).

Another way to formulate non-narrative identity is through Vaclav Cílek’s and Gerard Manley Hopkins’ notion of “inscape.” Cílek shares insights from a geologist’s point of view in his book on identity – *Inner and Outer Landscapes* (2005, 2010). An inner landscape, or inscape, as Cílek calls it, quoting the British poet Gerard Manleye Hopkins, is an “inner space or inner landscape,” which lies in opposition to an “outer” landscape. Cílek is an inter-disciplinarian, combining geology and philosophy in his writing, and “inscape” is a term that originates in literature, but Cílek lends a geologist’s perspective to it. Cílek takes up Hopkins’ understanding of inscape as an “inner space,” a “certain type of inner pattern or rhythm;” however, to Cílek, the inscape is formed and transformed through the interaction with its outside extension – the landscape – and vice versa. Rather than defining the internal world through opposition to the external, this interpretation presents the inner self as a result of ongoing dialogue with the outside environment. The notion of an evolving inscape also abandons the image of the self as a stable, singular entity. Instead, the human inner world emerges as a land: always changing, horizontal, non-hierarchical and non-narrative. Most importantly, the inscape has the capacity to blend with the landscape, and in Cílek’s words, “in this process then a new inner landscape is formed.” The flexible notion of inscape, defined by interplay and dialogue, is useful when addressing the relationship between complex hybrid spaces (such as apartment performance venues) and non-narrative human identities. In other words, hybrid spaces and their importance are better understood when the identity is explained as a multi-channeled, evolving flow because such an approach allows for a view outside the direct cause-and-effect (space-on-human) perspective and opens analytical options beyond binary divisions (inside-outside).

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171Of course, this was by no means a new idea, not only for this time period and not only in the USSR. The work of Le Corbusier or Karel Lhota are just two examples.
172Лебина:2017, 17
173Lefebvre:1991, 362
174Cílek:2010
175Cílek:2010, 5
176Cílek:2010, 5
Hopkin’s and Cilek’s inscape is not the only term that approaches human identity in relation to the environment in such a way. According to the cognitive scientist Mark Turner (see Introduction), identity is a process – an example of what Turner calls “advanced cognitive blending” – that produces the human inner self, frequently in interplay with external input. Turner writes, “we construct a personal sense of self, a stable identity that undergoes change. Actually, we can construct different personal senses of self, depending on what mental web is active in our brains and what is brought to mind by props in our circumstances, and still feel that, although we were different just a few minutes ago, the self we happen to be right now is utterly stable.” That is to say, what humans perceive to be a singular “I” is, from a cognitive perspective, a flow of multiple “I”s that continuously evolve through communication with their environment. In other words, Turner’s observations of the structure of the self compliment Cilek’s description of inscape as a dialogical process of identity construction.

The props and circumstances that our minds use to construct a self can be anything; however, few places are as vital to the process of self-identity formation as the domestic space. According to Turner, the importance of the space people inhabit – their own personal landscape – is fundamental to how their inner world is formed and therefore how they perceive themselves. In Bachelard's words: “...over and beyond our memories, the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us. It is a group of organic habits.” Lefebvre adds that it is a space that “has an origin, and that origin is childhood, with its hardships, its achievements, and its lacks.” As a place where humans spend their most intimate moments, home is a mental web that contributes heavily to the construction of what people perceive as their most real selves (as in, “at home, I am most myself”). Likewise, humans constantly adapt their surroundings to better fit who they are, thus completing a sort of ever-evolving and expanding feedback loop. A contradiction exists in this loop: a perceived stable, singular identity resulting from the vast ebb and flow of mental data. The contradiction, according to Turner, is partly masked by the more or less unchanging everyday environment. That is to say, the mind is renewing its information all the time, but as long as the information it renews remains the same (the sky is still up, and one’s face in the mirror is the same one that was seen a few hours ago), the mind will continue to perceive the self as unchanged.

Lefebvre, in turn, observes that “[o]ne of the most glaring paradoxes about abstract space is the fact that it can be at once the whole set of locations where contradictions are generated, the medium in which those contradictions evolve and which they tear apart, and, lastly, the means whereby they are smothered and replaced by an appearance of consistency.” That is to say, the domestic space supporting the perception of a stable self-identity is consistent only on the surface. In reality, it contains contradictions and transitory areas so complex that, in her study of domestic spaces, Chiara Briganti observes, “... the history of interior is a history of the mapping and crossing of boundaries” and Svetlana Boym writes that an archeology of everyday life necessarily “studies border zones between the routine and the ideological, the mundane and the aesthetic.” From a cognitive perspective, ambiguous components of domestic environments – “[m]irrors, shadows, impressions, echoes [–] ... are so routinely used to support advanced blending that an entire study could be conducted on the subject.” In other words, Lefebvre's “glaring paradox” lands in the centre of our self-identities and makes a humble apartment much more interesting.

This interest is reflected in the arts, manifesting in several ways which I discuss later in this study. One

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177 Turner:2014, 65
178 Bachelard:1958, 14
179 Lefebvre:1991, 362
180 Lefebvre:1991, 363
181 Briganti: 2012, 73
182 Boym:2002
183 Turner:2014, 67

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example, however, merits a closer look here. In Mikhail Bulgakov’s novel, the *Master and Margarita* (written 1928–1940, published 1966–1967), one of the leading roles in the plot is assigned to a Moscow apartment. This unassuming home, which originally belongs to a jeweler’s widow and is, at the start of the novel, inhabited by her and two other neighbors, is mysteriously vacated to accommodate a guest of some importance – Satan himself, along with his entourage. They prefer the apartment to a hotel, a house or indeed any other accommodation, despite the fact that they have anything they desire at their disposal. They take over the apartment, which already has the reputation of being a “bad” apartment where people disappear without a trace – a quality of the space that only intensifies with the guests’ arrival. During the course of the novel, the apartment expands and shrinks, and allows characters to pass through walls and otherwise entirely ignore the rules of physics and time. The rest of the buildings’ inhabitants observe the apartment intently – not only in an allusion to the Stalinist practice of constantly being spied on by one’s neighbors, but also because the lives of those who make a decision to come inside the apartment are forever transformed. The incongruence between the apartment’s instability (every visitor is greeted by a new set of circumstances) and the permanence of the changes inflicted upon the visitors (they end up mad, jailed or dead) is a continuous source of curiosity and fear for everyone in the building. In other words, Bulgakov’s satanic apartment permanently transforms and affects others, sees through disguises and defines who they really are, without having a constant identity itself.

Bulgakov’s fictional space reveals much about real-life apartments. The choice to place Satan in an apartment, rather than a house, goes beyond the author’s satirizing the hot-button issue of his day in the 1920's, the so-called “apartment problem.” The tension created in the novel between the regular world of the building and the magic world of Satan’s lair would not be possible if the lair was a house. One of the reasons for this is the apartment’s lack of a house’s monumental solidity. In contrast to a house, the transformative ambiguity of the real-life apartment lends itself to the imagination (and literary fancy) in a vastly different way. The contrast between house and apartment is two-tiered: on one level, there is an architectural juxtaposition between them as two types of buildings; on the other, there is a conceptual opposition between a house and an apartment as types of dwellings.

From an architectural perspective, a free-standing house differs from an apartment complex in important ways. Looking back to Bachelard, whom I quoted at the start of this chapter, the house is grounded in earth; it is singularly present and wholly submitted to one’s ownership. The house, seen from this perspective, is the modern day equivalent of the fortress – a distant relative of the original, the same way as a pigeon is to a dinosaur. The apartment building, in contrast, is fragmented, composed of many small units within a larger whole. This fragmentated structure is visible in everything – from windows to mailboxes – and it lends the apartment building a feeling of a dwelling not altogether human. If the house is a fortress, then the apartment building is a hive. Indeed, reading Bachelard's description, city apartments seem almost not fit for humans.184 It is perhaps the nonhuman structure that lends the units in a building their malleability and ambiguity, making them an ideal playground for writers such as Bulgakov.

If the house is seen not only as an architectural object but also as an anthropological one, then it can be compared to an apartment in yet another way. Roland Barthes, in his *Mythologies* (1957), compares a house to a ship. While this is a beautiful comparison, a far more apt one would be between a ship and an apartment rather than a house. A house, according to Bachelard, has roots – it has a basement and a roof and shares a different relationship to nature than an apartment. An apartment is much closer to Barthes’ description of a “cubby hole,” an enclosed, finite unit populated with well-worn, familiar objects, sailing in a fluctuating sea of a city. Barthes writes that “the ship may well be a symbol of

184Bachelard:1958, 27
departure; it is, at a deeper level, the emblem of closure. An inclination for ships always means the joy of perfectly enclosing oneself, of having at hand the greatest possible number of objects, having at ones disposal an absolutely finite space.” 185 On the one hand, time also works differently inside the apartment and outside of it. Time moves at a different speed and changes the space in a different way. On the other hand, deterritorialization as defined by Alexei Yurchak (see Ch.1) also affects temporal perception. This is especially relevant to later analyses of apartment theatres because, as Yurchak points out, “it would be erroneous to examine space and time of communication in various social milieus as certain ‘islands’ of truth and freedom 186, isolated from the spatial-temporal governmental regime.” 187 In reality, he continues, the relationship between government and private life was much more intertwined, resulting in a kind of “phenomenological inversion between private and public.” 188

2.3 Notes on Soviet Domesticity

- I will definitely, definitely buy an apartment in St. Petersburg ... (Tatyana Tolstaya, Raisins:2005) 189

The imaginary domestic in a society this study deals with was, as it is in any society, shaped by a blend of time-and-place-specific cultural, political and social forces. Soviet domesticity, in other words, was a complex hybrid of state policy, waves of housing crises, increasing industrialization, nostalgia and comings-and-goings of everyday existence.

Russian cultural anthropologist Natalia Lebina writes that, “[b]y the start of the 20th century, a specific housing structure was formed in Russian cities, corresponding to the level of urban development and communal technology and reflective of social stratification of the population.” 190 However, according to Lebina, the early 20th century still saw a house as a typical living space for urban dwellers. This perception began to change with the revolution, when the “events of October 1917 loosened the urban resident's understanding of a stable representational norm – the ‘house’. ” 191 By the 1950s and late 60s, the mainstays of Soviet housing where the kommunalka (Rus., kommunalka in Pl.) and the khrushchevka (Rus., known in Czech as panelák, after the concrete panels used to construct the buildings). A kommunalka was a communal apartment while a khrushchevka, which appeared much later and was named after Nikita Khrushchev, usually housed one family at a time and came with non-shared facilities. Both of these urban housing models appeared in Poland and Czechoslovakia, albeit with variations, stemming from a desire to emulate socialist architectural trends and a prolonged, persistent housing crisis.

185Barthes:1957, 74

186Although František Stárek (Ch 3.) uses this term – islands of freedom – in his native Czech, he does so with a rounded, first-hand understanding of the accompanying socio-historical context.
187Юрчак:2016, 308
188ibid
189“Непременно, непременно куплю себе квартиру в Питере...” (Татьяна Толстая:2007)
190"К началу XX столетия в российских городах сложилась определённая структура жилья, соответствовавшая уровню градостроительной и коммунальной техники, а также отражающая социальную стратификацию населения. В представлении горожанина 'дом' ассоциировался с индивидуальным жилищем, наличие которого считалось нормой повседневной жизни.” (Лебина:2016, 67)
191“...события октября 1917 года во многом расшатали сформировавшееся в ментальности городского жителя устойчивое представление-норму – 'дом'.” (Лебина:2016, 67)
Natalia Lebina writes that “[t]he foundation of the realities of the housing policy of the Bolsheviks was the idea of a fair distribution of material wealth, including real estate.”\textsuperscript{192} The implementation of these notions in real life, though, was not as straightforward. Lebina points out that, even in such standardized housing projects such as khrushchevka buildings, some apartments were of much higher quality that others, having been intended for use by Party officials.\textsuperscript{193} State ownership, too, was somewhat malleable, as Ilya Utekhin explains in greater detail:

Some things Soviet people considered as free from the state. This was for many citizens housing, because public housing was received without payment for its provision, and payments for housing (“rent”) were relatively small and amounted to no more than one tenth of the family budget. Although the rent was formally considered a rent, no one thought of their housing as rented. The rent was perceived rather as a fee for the maintenance and maintenance of housing in good condition.

At the same time, provided housing (if you were registered there permanently and “with the right to living space”) was the property of the family – in the sense that descendants and direct heirs acquired the same right: “having been born” in this living space, they, as a rule, received a full residence permit on it (at the place of registration of parents) automatically. In some limited sense, this was the equivalent of not ownership, but the right to use. When dividing the family, you could “exchange” this property for two or more parts.\textsuperscript{194}

Lebina writes that for a long time “[t]he main type of housing in the Soviet city was a communal apartment, in the depth of which there were formed special norms of life.”\textsuperscript{195} Christine Varga-Harris, who writes extensively on domesticity during the Stalin and Khrushchev eras, notes that “[t]he communal apartment never became a place where normal life could arise.”\textsuperscript{196} Instead, “the illusion of clear-cut public and private realms is shattered”\textsuperscript{197} and a specific domestic culture developed around the kommunalka, complete with its own rules and folklore.\textsuperscript{198} In the words of Svetlana Boym, “[e]ach communal apartment had its own myths and its own folklore ... You can write the history of Russia as the history of a huge communal apartment with all its mysteries and secrets.”\textsuperscript{199} As a consequence of state policies regarding housing, combined with everyday reality, an ambiguity arose “... from the incompatibility of the state’s desire to exert total control with the individual citizen’s need for private

\textsuperscript{192}“Фундаментом реалий жилищной политики большевиков стала идея справедливого распределения материальных благ, в число которых входила и недвижимость.” (Лебина:2016)

\textsuperscript{193}Лебина:2016

\textsuperscript{194}“Некоторые вещи советские люди рассматривали как доставшиеся им от государства бесплатно. Таким для многих граждан было жилье, ведь доставалось государственное жилье без платы за его предоставление, а платежи за жилье («квартплата») были сравнительно невелики и составляли не больше одной десятой части семейного бюджета. Хотя квартплата вроде и формально считалась арендной платой, никто не думал о своем жилье как съемном; у государства не снимали, снимали у частников, и тогда арендная плата превышала государственную квартплату в четыре-пять раз (это был элемент рынка в нерыночном море социализма). Так что квартплата воспринималась скорее как плата за эксплуатацию и поддержание жилья в исправном состоянии. При этом предоставленное жилье (если ты был прописан там постоянно и “с правом на жилиплощадь”) было достоянием семьи - в том смысле, что потомки и прямые наследники приобретали то же самое право: “родившись” на этой жилиплощади, они, как правило, получали полноценную прописку на ней (по месту прописки родителей) автоматически. В каком-то ограниченном смысле это было эквивалентом не собственности, а права на использование. При разделе семьи можно было “разменять” это достояние на две или несколько частей.” (Утехин:2007, 90)

\textsuperscript{195}“Основным видом жилья в советском городе становилась коммунальная квартира, в недрах которой действовали особые нормы жизни.” (Лебина:2016, 106)

\textsuperscript{196}“Коммунальная квартира так и не оказалась местом, где смогла возникнуть нормальная жизнь.” (Варга-Харрис: 2011, 162)

\textsuperscript{197}Johnston:2013, 405

\textsuperscript{198}See Утехин in Неклюдов:2003

\textsuperscript{199}“Каждая коммуналька имела свои мифы и свой фольклор... Можно написать историю России как историю огромной коммунальной квартиры со всеми ее загадками и секретами.” (Бойм:2002)
Thus, as Boym writes, “[b]y the middle and especially towards the end of the 60s, privacy was seen in the informal culture almost as the only model of uncompromising behavior. Private life was not an escape from reality, but an attempt to create a parallel reality that does not work according to ideological schemes.”

This ambiguity reflected itself in a specific way in which the apartment, the home and everyday domesticity crop up in Czech, Polish and Russian theatre and literature. There are plays wherein the apartment is no less important than the characters, for instance Mikhail Bulgakov’s *Zoya’s Apartment* (1925), Vaclav Havel’s *The Family Evening* (1960) and Sławomir Mrożek’s *Tango* (1964). In literature, we see this in Andrej Bitov’s *Apothecary Island* (1968), Sasha Sokolov’s *School for Fools* (1976) and Milan Kundera’s *Laughable Loves* (1970) – all written as neurotic narratives about apartments, dachas and the minute details of everyday life. There is a tendency in all of these works to represent the everyday with a mixture of aversion and nostalgia. After a series of grotesque adventures, Bulgakov’s *Zoya* closes the play with a desperate “Farewell, farewell, my apartment!” Housing is often a source of dark humor, as in Mikhail Bulgakov’s aforementioned play about Zoyka or Zdeněk Svěrák’s film *Ball Lighting* (1979), and a source of tragedy in reality where people in Soviet *kommunalkas* were known to snitch on their neighbors in order to claim the newly available space. An apartment is a coveted commodity. Svetlana Boym observes a similar pattern in the artistic manifestation of furniture in early Soviet literature – as a manifestation of a world gone. This obsession with housing – founded on more than nostalgia – is, according to Boym, characteristic of Soviet-style socialism. Complications in or around housing form a place- and time-specific cultural marker. In such an environment, the concept of a home as a foundation of one’s identity gains a whole new meaning, since obtaining a home was often the central concern of one’s existence. At the same time, works of Socialist realism, intended to portray the new sunny and optimistic Socialist *byt* (or everyday routine), showed the communal apartment as a positive space of happy cohabitation – for example, paintings such as *Housewarming* (1937) or *Moving to a New Apartment* (1952) and films such as *The Pokrovsky Gate* (1982). Perhaps because of the arising paradoxes and ambiguity, Soviet apartment folklore does not treat the apartment as a solidly defined object – quite the opposite. Examples of this can be found across the spectrum of Soviet literature, from the aforementioned Mikhail Bulgakov’s “bad apartment” in 1920’s *Master and Margarita*, with its disappearing tenants and malleable square footage, and Sasha Sokolov’s 1970’s apartment in *School for Fools*, which mutates (for instance, into a green valley where the protagonist meets Leonardo da Vinci) with little effort (“It’s enough to swing open the door!..”)

2.4 The Apartment as a Heterotopia – Case Studies

200van Baak:2009, 384

201“Уже в середине и особенно к концу 60-х уход в частную жизнь стал рассматриваться в неофициальной культуре чуть ли не как единственная модель бескомпромиссного поведения. Частная жизнь представляла собой не побег от реальности, а попытку создания параллельной реальности, не работающей по идеологическим схемам.” (Бойм:2002, 118)

202“Прощай, прощай, моя квартира!” (Булгаков:1992)

203 Kulový Blesk, is a comedy which chronicles an operation during which an entire set of people in Prague arrange a brilliantly intricate exchange of apartments which are more suitable to their needs.

204Новоселье (К. Петров-Водкин, 1937)

205Переезд на новую квартиру (А. Лактионов,1952)

206Покровские ворота (1982)

207нехорошая квартира (Rus.)

208“Стоит только распахнуть дверь!” (Соколов:1999, 39)
The following sections of this chapter move away from a wider historical and conceptual discussion to explore specific case studies. To begin, I first offer relatively descriptive discussions of the projects and then use the chapter conclusion to explain what my empirical findings mean for the theoretical framework that I introduced earlier. Although the analysis in this chapter focuses primarily on the Theatre on Tarczyńska Street / Teatr Osobny and Šlepěj v Okně, they are by far not the only instances of performances in apartments. For example, as early as 1942, Polish theatre painter and director Tadeusz Kantor and a group of artists “met in private apartments all over Krakow under the Nazi occupation.” It was in one of these apartments that the first production of Kantor’s Independent Theatre – Juliusz Słowacki’s Balladyna (1943) – took place, followed by Stanisław Wyspiański’s The Return of Odysseus (1944). The Prague Surrealist group was founded in 1934 by the writer Vítězslav Nezval, 10 years after André Breton's revolutionary Manifeste du surréalisme, and it is still active today – a fact that earned it the nickname of the “permanent avant-garde.” Having fallen from grace with the Communist Party after the war, the surrealists went underground and held a series of apartment meetings and staged readings by literary theoretician Vratislav Effenberger and others. The scripts for these one-acts were included in the Surrealist publication Surrealistické Vychodisko (1969).

In 1976, Prague actress Vlasta Chramostová, along with a group of other artists, established a short-lived but influential experiment called simply Apartment Theatre (Bytové Divadlo) – although the actress participated in similar projects as early as 1944, acting in Brno apartments. In her autobiography, Chramostová quotes professor Jiři Voráč, who termed her endeavor “the first phenomenon of its kind after 1948 ... i.e. an attempt at regular and composed theatrical activity outside of the official (state approved) sphere.” The Czech playwright Pavel Kohout describes the lengths to which the group went in order to maintain secrecy – for instance, setting up five decoy performance locations just to be able to record his Play Macbeth, written specifically for Chramostová’s apartment theatre, in a sixth performance (the resulting records allowed Tom Stoppard, who was in communication with the group through the underground post, to write his Cahoots Macbeth).

How do concepts such as deterritorialization or heterotopia engage with these types of projects while keeping in mind the historical context of domesticity (discussed earlier in this chapter)? How do the case studies below fit into a broader pattern and how do such activities interact with the non-narrative identities of their participants?

Theatre on Tarczyńska Street (Warsaw, 1955 – 58) and Teatr Osobny (Warsaw, 1958 – 63)

On early spring evening in 1955, the lobby and the stone staircase with pre-war carved wooden banisters of the building on Warsaw's Tarczyńska street 11 were buzzing with people climbing up to the fourth floor, to apartment 33, hoping for at least a glimpse of what went on inside. The building itself was rather ordinary, aside from the fact that it was one of the few to survive the methodical and meticulous demolition of Warsaw by the Nazi forces at the close of the war, almost ten years prior. But this building housed a secret.

The people who were lucky enough to make it inside the apartment that night were ushered into a large, crowded room with an alcove in the back, forming a sort of small stage. Along the perimeter of the

209 Witts:2010, 9
211 Chramostová:1999, 85
212 Kohout:1987, 15
213 Here and below: Kirchner, Białoszewski, Sobolewski
The room was packed. Those who did not manage to secure a seating place on the benches, simply sat or stood wherever space permitted, with the most daring climbing atop the wardrobe and other furniture. It was smoky. The windows were covered with black paper. At the back of the room, in the little stage-alcove, stood a small cupboard adapted to be a tiny stage. On this stage, the excited audience was treated to a double-bill of short plays enacted by the hands and fingers of the authors with the assistance of various mismatched objects, such as a real church goblet or a crystal salt shaker.

Today, the 1912 building is painted a mild pastel yellow, lodged between two newer structures and houses shops on the ground floor. It is rather cheerful, although during the period in question (1950s) the building and the street were described by witnesses as sad. In 1955 the building was populated by several members of the family of Lech Stefański, a young poet and playwright. After the death of her husband, Lech's aunt Olga moved into the kitchen and the adjoining room of her apartment, leaving her nephew with a large parlor. The Theatre on Tarczyńska Street 11 was a theatre founded in aunt Olga's home by three Polish writers – Bogusław Choiński, Miron Białoszewski and Lech Emfazy Stefański – and existed in Warsaw between 1955 – 58.

The authors produced short, highly visual works using household and found objects. They sought to give the playwright control of their creation from beginning to end. Thus, every author was also responsible for designing, directing and acting in his or her play. The theatre came into being in the Spring 1955 and saw four seasons. For a long while, only those specially invited were present, the entrance was free. The invitations, printed on small cards and signed by each of the evening's authors, included date, time and the address of the performance. However, the popularity of the project among the young artistic community grew quickly. Given the small size of the venue and no formal publicity, the theatre was very successful – with an estimated 7,000 viewers over three seasons. Despite their success, the group ended their collaboration after only four years.

This project, despite its fairly short life, was not an isolated flash of activity. Rather, from a more arial perspective, it can be seen as an important contribution to the development of Polish avant-garde drama and a link in a chain of off-the-grid activity in Warsaw. The upcoming sections of this chapter record the history of Theatre on Tarczyńska but also position the project within the appropriate timeline and illustrate that the project was not an isolated experiment but a manifestation of a tendency which began during the Nazi occupation and continued with Miron Białoszewski's Separate Theatre (Teatr Osobny).

Early days of apartment culture – Nazi occupation of Warsaw

Theatre on Tarczyńska and its later reincarnation, Teatr Osobny, were apartment projects that did not appear suddenly or develop in isolation. An apartment culture in Warsaw can be traced even beyond the Nazi occupation and Stefański's and Białoszewski's projects were, in large, rooted in that tradition. For this reason, it is important to pause at the wartime meetings. For a detailed account of apartment activities in Warsaw during the Nazi occupation, I rely on the memoirs of Stanisław Prószyński, who was a Polish composer and friend to poet Miron Białoszewski and, after the war, to Stefański. Prószyński wrote and performed music for Teatr na Tarczyńska, ran front of house. After the somewhat scandalous demise of the theatre, Prószyński cut off all contact with Białoszewski for over twenty years. However, the composer recalls their intellectual adventures during the Nazi occupation of Warsaw (1939 - 45) with clarity.

Along with others, Prószyński, Białośewski and Stanisław Swen Czachorowski – a poet and actor – formed a sort of nucleus of underground creative activity and their homes provided venues for
informal, conspiratorial meetings. Białoszewski termed these activities “patriotically-literary” *patriotyczno-literacke*. Although the group did not officially organize themselves into any coherent movement with a name and agenda, Czachorowski, along with Białoszewski, Irena Prudil and Halina Zancberg created Teatr Swena (Swen's Theatre), active between 1942 – 44. Prószyński admits that the strictly secret nature of these gatherings, though not openly engaging with the occupants, comprised an vital element of opposition. Any creative and intellectual activity in Nazi-occupied Warsaw became, by virtue of its very existence, politically charged. Ownership of radios was punishable by death. Vinyl records and record players became a rarity. Nevertheless, live concerts were organized in Warsaw and, in Krakow, Tadeusz Kantor staged performances in his Teatr Podziemny.

The format of a regular meeting between Prószyński and his friends went something like this: the beginning was always the same. Swen would bring along a pre-war record player with a single, scratched up vinyl containing *Etiuda Rewolucyjna* (Revolutionary Étude) by Frederick Chopin. Once all the guests (never more than 10 – 12) were gathered, Swen with utmost seriousness would play the record. Everyone listened to Chopin standing up. This patriotic ritual was followed by a varied program. This included poetry readings, music, theatre, literature and occasional visual arts exhibitions.

They read Thomas Mann, Oscar Wilde, Marcel Proust, Jan Parandowski. Prószyński described as especially memorable Swen's performance of other works by Słowacki, including another parody – in “Arabic costumes” and “desert setting”. This was year 1941 – 42. Prószyński recalls an audio performance of Karol Hubert Rostworowski's *Judasz z Kariothu* (Judas of Kerioth, 1913) read from behind a curtain, followed by fragments from *Maria Stuart* (1830) by Juliusz Słowacki. At Miron's apartment, on 40 Chłodna Street, the audience was treated to a parody of Słowacki's *Balladyna* entitled *Opera Stanisława P*. Miron and Swen appeared in the doorway wearing white, floor-length dresses (likely made from bedsheets) and carrying containers for raspberry picking. Upon their entrance, the performers sang an opera duet “Staszka P.” to Słowacki's words.

> The funniest was the fragment with the words: “What if I killed you, sister?!” sang in Swen's ringing mezzo soprano (which turned out to be a falsetto) and Miron's reply in something resembling an alto: “What if you killed me, sister?”

This parody, however, was an exception. Most of the evenings had a serious tone. For example, a big impact on the group had Irena Prudil's reading of Miron Białoszewski's 1943 poem *Jerozolima* (Jerusalem). In its initial parts, the poet draws a parallel between the gates to the Warsaw Ghetto (the

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214Kirchner:1996, 25
215ibid
216Classical music recitals took place at the coffeehouse of professor Bolesław Woytowicz (on Nowy Świat street). In 1943, a series of symphonic concerts took place at the Teatr Polski (Polish Theatre, renamed by the Nazis to Theater der Stadt Warschau). In the Concert Hall of Konserwatorium na Okólniku (Conservatory at Okólnik) further performances were arranged by the underground government through the Rada Główna Opiekuńcza (Central Welfare Council). In the Spring 1944 these included the compositions of Andrzej Panufnik.
217Prószyński is most likely referring to Słowacki's “Ojciec zadzumionych”, a long poem with an Arabic setting that was very popular as a subject of amateur performances. Text can be found here: https://literat.ug.edu.pl/ojciec/index.htm
218Balladyna, written by Juliusz Słowacki in 1834, is one of the best known works of Polish Romanticism. It is a tragic drama, which follows the violent and unlawful rise to power of fictional Queen Balladyna. The fragment of the play parodied by Swen and Białoszewski is a scene where Balladyna, still a regular girl, competes with her sister Alina at raspberry picking to win the hand of a royal groom. Upon noticing that Alina has more berries, Balladyna murders her. This crime sets off a chain of others which eventually lead to Balladyna's rise to the throne. The tragedy's main theme is the danger of power gained unlawfully and the impossibility of a healthy society under such rule. In 1943, Tadeusz Kantor staged *Balladyna* in a Krakow apartment. It was the first production of his Independent Theatre
219Kirchner:1996, 25

45
“Ghetto-Gehenna”), which he could see daily from his window, and the gates to the Holy City\textsuperscript{220}.

Another favorite activity of the artists consisted of prolonged walks, not always safe in the climate of the occupied city, around Warsaw. On these walks, Prószyński recalls, he and Białoszewski searched for theatre, which was an even bigger passion for them than music.\textsuperscript{221} This need for the theatrical was fulfilled in the church, observing the performance of church rituals. They found it in the religious rituals, the mystery of which fascinated Białoszewski. This ritualistic aspect, along with the poet's famous walks, becomes important later, when Białoszewski goes on to create his own theatre, in part inspired by a church ritual he saw in a hut in the Carpathian mountains.

After the war – Kobyłka

After the war, Prószyński and his friends sought to revive the artistic meetings of their occupation days. Around this time, they made some new friends, most significantly for this study – Lech Emfazy Stefański. Swen, who went to Krakow to study acting professionally, returned to Warsaw and around 1947 moved into an apartment in the municipality of Kobyłka. A home that, both among the young intellectuals and their ideological opponents, was to become legendary. Białoszewski was working as a reporter and living in very poor conditions on Poznańska Street. His apartment was a post-War version of \textit{komunałka}, where Miron shared a room, separated only by a thin divider, with strangers. He escaped his noisy neighbors by sleeping all day and writing or wandering the streets of Warsaw by night. He was at times stopped by the Communist police, befuddled by why would someone wander the streets aimlessly. At this time, Kobyłka – where Miron's friend Swen moved – was an area of Warsaw simultaneously inhabited by other poets, including Irina Prudil. Swen's apartment became a meeting place for young poets and an oasis of independent intellectual activity amidst the raging “war with formalism”. Forbidden from publishing their work and attacked by the press, the “long haired poets from Kobyłka” turned to discussions of creating an apartment theatre as an independent creative outlet in opposition to the official stage. The poets of Białoszewski’s generation “…turned their attention to ordinary objects and dull daily routine. These are seen as the only verifiable reality, the only objective facts which can be freed of moral preconceptions and delusions.”\textsuperscript{222} However, their theatre transformed the site of this “dull daily routine” into a highly stylized, abstract and imaginative world.

The Apartment

The key point that separates Theatre on Tarczyńska from wartime apartment meetings is the deliberate choice of space. In Choińska's memoirs, the apartment plays a central role in the creation of Theatre on Tarczyńska – “before the theatre – there was the space”\textsuperscript{223} are the opening words in her memoir of the project. Stefański decided to create a home theatre out of artistic impulses rather than from a need to escape the reality of war. The function of the apartment, in this case, shifted from something that conceals to something that can be exploited to achieve a particular artistic effect. This effect was an alienating combination of the domestic features and the performances, which were decidedly non-realistic. One of the main reasons for this artistic choice was Stefański's interest in Witkacy's\textsuperscript{224} theory

\textsuperscript{220} M. Białoszewski, \textit{Utwory zebrane}, v. 13 („Polot nad niskimi sferami”), Warszawa, 2017, p. 21-22  
\textsuperscript{221}Kirchner:1996, 24  
\textsuperscript{222}Levine:1976, 40  
\textsuperscript{223}Choińska in Kirchner:1996, 149  
\textsuperscript{224}Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, (1885 – 1939), Polish avant-garde author, playwright, theorist and painter
of Pure Form (Czysta forma) as a source of inspiration and experimentation for the theatre. Pure Form presented a set of ideas that Witkacy developed in relation first to poetry and then drama. Witkacy wrote that a certain type of “internal necessity” was at the core of his work and was more important than meaning or content. For Stefański this would mean work that did not, in contrast to politically charged wartime gatherings or contemporary activist theatre, enter into dialogue with any kind of system nor engaged into a narrative of any sort. Instead, he took the cue from Witkacy, who “... through the discontinuous affinities of actions in his model for Pure Form in the theatre...attempted to rouse the audience's deadened nerves to the point of amazement.” Kiebuzińska compares this approach to Marinetti’s, who wrote that "[p]oetry should be an uninterrupted sequence of new images...the broader their affinities, the longer the images keep their power to amaze." If we connect this idea with Mark Turner's notion of identity (discussed earlier) as a self-renewing blend, we can see that this approach towards performance actively engages the non-narrative aspect of identity by removing all traces of discourse or narrative meaning. However, it is not only Stefański's attempts at embodying Witkacy's ideas on stage, but his decision to do so in a domestic setting that make Theatre on Tarczyńska a deterritorialized place. Here we have come full circle to the importance of the apartment for this project.

The street at the time was rather sad-looking, Choińska recalls. The floors of the building were very high and the climb up to the 4th floor was long. On the second floor lived Lech's mother, him and his aunt Ola resided on the fourth. Upon entering the apartment, one found themselves in a long hallway. The door to the right led to the room of Lech's aunt Ola, Lech's room was straight ahead. The room was very large with a big niche of “unknown purpose unless the architect was psychic” (and foresaw the little theatre in the distant future). In the left corner resided a white tiled fireplace. Between the fireplace and the niche, Choińska continues, stood a wooden “baba”, a hag on whose face was carved an impressions of “crazy determination.” This hag, in the company of a gramophone and a baroque cherub, was the first thing to catch the eye of a visitor. The walls were covered in Witkacy's art – pastel portraits of women who “drilled you with their eyes”. The bigger part of the room was filled with makeshift benches and became the space for the audience. The niche, concealed with old fabric housed the stage and the backstage. Stefański himself describes his room in detail, the properties of which struck him as highly theatrical at first glance and were the final push towards the creation of the project. It was a vast, high ceilinged room, built in such a way that a four-meter separation with a wooden frame for lights divided the room into two unequal parts. From the hallway, one would enter into the bigger part of the room (it was about three times the size of the smaller part) which looked like a foyer. Stefański writes: “I was under the impression that the architect made a joke.”

Another push towards housing the theatre in Stefański's home came from an article he read on the French movement Art et Action. This was a theatre opened in 1919 by French architect Eudouard Autant and actress Louise Lara that operated in a Montmartre loft until 1938. Space was an integral component of Autant and Lara's work – Gray Read notes that “[i]n twenty years of work in theatre between the world wars, Architect Edouard Autant embraced performance as a means to explore how

225 Choińska in Kirchner:1996, 150
226 Indeed, Stefański's interest in Witkiewicz can be seen from the nickname “Emfazy” which Stefański chose in emulation of Witkiewicz's “Witkacy”
227 Witkiewicz:1968, 296
228 Kiebuzińska:1993,66
229 Filippo Tommaso Emilio Marinetti (1876 – 1944), Italian poet, editor, art theorist, and founder of the Futurist movement
230 Kiebuzińska:1993, 66
231 Choińska in Kirchner:1996, 150
232 ibid
233 Stefański in Kirchner:1996, 141
spaces act rather than how they look.” Art et Action believed that theatre fulfilled not one social role – but several and that to fulfill these roles theatre had to be performed in a different type of space. For example, the space needed for “academic theatre” had to be a library; social theatre had to occur in a public space akin to today’s shopping mall. Most importantly, the central cite for all of their experiments was their studio apartment, which is what inspired the Stefański decades later.

Format of the Evening Performances

The entire history of Theatre on Tarczyńska, as I mentioned before, lasted a span of four seasons (Fig.2.1, 2.2-2.3). Each of these consisted of three short performances written, designed, directed and acted out by the principal members of the company, nevertheless with copious assistance from other members of the group. The first set took place in the spring 1955. It was an evening of one-acts, performed inside a small wooden cupboard converted into a stage, as for a puppet performance. The shows took place inside the box, with the artists using only their hands and odd props such as a small household objects. There were two plays that first evening. These were, in order of appearance, *Homunculus* by Stefański and *Wiwísćęcia* by Białoszewski. The latter, described by the author as a “monodrama for ten fingers” took place in an open box inside of which a tiny set comprising of small household objects was placed. Białoszewski's gloved hands and his fingers became a Greek chorus or a group of nuns in an absurd non-narrative. I discuss this play in more detail below, in the section on Białoszewski's Separate Theatre.

The preparations for the second season began in 1956. The resulting program was three different full-evening bills presented in rotation. Each of the theatre's founding members had an evening to himself. The first was Stefański’s, followed by Białoszewski's and finally Choiński's.

The infamous (because it did not do well) third season was an experiment – the group was offered a space in a cultural youth centre Hybrid [Hybrydy] (on Mokotowska street) and decided to capitalize on the opportunity. The outcome consisted of two evenings of performances – one Stefański's and one Białoszewski's but, according to Prószyński’s recollections, the incomparable atmosphere of a home-turned-theatre was missing and the group promptly returned to Tarczyńska. Choński also recalls that the atmosphere was different in Hybrid, a club where the project was invited to perform – she reports that “something was missing.” Nevertheless, the group made another attempt at playing outside the apartment – on New Year's eve, 1956 they performed at Śródmiejski Dom Kultury. This, again, was a disappointment according the Prószyński.

The fourth and final season was carried out without Miron Białoszewski and that is the reason why, in his biographies, we come across Teatr na Tarczyńskiej as having only three seasons. In fact, Stefański carried on with his project while, in the meantime, Białoszewski was already setting up Teatr Osobny over at his place at Plac Dąbrowskiego. Such as it was, the 4th season of Teatr na Tarczyńskiej

234 Read: 2005, 4
235 “Monodram na dziesięć palców” in Teatr Osobny, Białoszewski: 1973
236 Kirchner: 1996, 39
237 By ironic coincidence, this club, being a public venue, converted the hybrid nature of the apartment theatre into a more orthodox theatre performance
238 Kirchner: 1996, 40
239 Choński in Kirchner: 1996, 150

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contained only two works: W.S. by Stefański and Model jest Bestija by Maria Fabicka.

Every season saw a run of several dozens of performances and the seating capacity, according to Prószyński's estimate, was 30 – 40 people not taking into account floor seating and standing room – people would sit or stand wherever possible, even, as I mentioned earlier, climbing the furniture to get a better look.240 To this end, Prószyński expands his estimate, writing that at full, the apartment could accommodate up to 120 audience members. Taking into account the group's performances outside of the apartment – at Hybrid and also at Dom Kultury, Prószyński estimates roughly over 7000 viewers over the four years of the theatre's existence, as I already mentioned.241 The group additionally recorded one of their shows – a popular song adapted to serve as an interlude – on the radio, significantly widening their audience base.

For a long time, entrance to the theatre was by invitation only. The invitations would be typed on small cards, hand-signed by all the authors and informing of the date, time and address of the performance. However, with theatre's popularity grew its attendance. Prószyński recalls writers, directors, actors and even school visits. At one point, even a minister. Indeed, the Minister of Culture (Włodzimierz Sokorski) granted the project 20,000 złoty (roughly the cost of a car at the time). The group divided the money among members by function, with each one receiving 200 złoty – this was because they identified 100 jobs within the company.242 This point perhaps best illustrates the paradox of censorship I discussed in Chapter 1, but is also a reflection of the changing attitudes of the Polish Thaw and a sharp contrast to the situation in Czechoslovakia 12 years later, when Jiří Kuběna (discussed below) conducted his apartment gatherings.

In case of Teatr na Tarczyńska, the hybrid nature of the undertaking is extended and is visible in the objects and the way the objects are used in performance. Frequently, these are everyday, household objects such as spoons and chairs stylized as props or the adaptation of household objects to serve as elements of theatrical architecture – for instance, the use of ironing boards to form rows of seats, theatre-like. The elements of a theatre, such as the curtain, the rowed seating, the darkness were strictly observed in the apartment setting, despite the fact that the group consciously rejected a traditional theatrical space. We must also remember that to Stefański, who harbored the idea of an apartment theatre even during the war – according to him and others – the apartment of his aunt elicited a “theatricality” that the participants of Šlépěj v Okně, a Czechoslovak project I discuss later in this chapter, assigned to their place as well. In other words, to the young post-war generation a grand Secession home, with its four-meter ceilings and a big hall already contained a theatricality not apparent in a regular home. These places carried with them an otherness that lent itself to creative interpretation in a different way than the needs of someone like Chramostová, who set her performances at her Prague home as an act of private defiance and who darkened her windows to avoid being noticed by the neighbors or the police.

As for costumes, Stefański concocted complex structures out of chairs and wire and everyday household objects in such a way that the objects interacted with his body, creating a hybrid being out of a regular person and regular objects (Fig.2.4). In this way, ordinary material items were transfigured into an extraordinary abstract beings. Of interest also is Białoszewski's use of paper to create costumes and props. These were flat, crudely painted and sometimes reminiscent of the cutouts one sees at fairs.

240Kirchner:1996, 40
241Kirchner:1996, 56-57
242Sobolewski:2012, 42
and concerts, where a person can put their face into the cutout oval and get their picture taken with another body. Here again, the actor would keep their face, but the rest would become someone or something else. These invented beings, hybrids of humans and household objects, simultaneously deterritorialized both the actor's body and the domestic. This becomes significant in the light of my earlier discussion of inscape or Turner's idea of self-identity in relation to everyday household things. Specifically, Turner's notion that a self-identity is a complex, constantly renewing blend of impulses that are reinforced by the surrounding environment. This is similar to the relationship of inscape (our inner world) to landscape (the outside that shapes and is shaped by the inside). In the case of Stefański's chair-person, there is a deeply ironic inversion of both Turner and Cilek's ideas (not deliberate, of course – Stefański worked some time before both Turner and Cilek). In the case of the chair-person, the non-narrative self, which is fed by daily routine and household objects, is inverted and moved to the exterior of the actor's body. The self is turned inside-out, rendered material and now covers Stefański like a metaphorical exoskeleton. It is a transition of inscape into landscape and is thus another double inversion: this hybrid is now contributing to the self-identity blends of his audience, re-entering inscapes of others and, in this way, demolishing narrative elements of identities by establishing a non-narrative loop between himself and his viewers. The chair-person and those who share the space with him are, at least momentarily, disengaged from reality, existing “out of”, deterritorialized. This, in effect, comes very close to Witkacy's statement that every moment has to amaze the audience and “[e]verything must be transformed in a way no one has ever seen before”\textsuperscript{243}. Kiebuzińska notes that, “[c]oncerned with the increasing mechanization of life, Witkacy hoped that his theater would shock the spectator's nervous system and act as a stimulating shower after long hours of stupefying work.”\textsuperscript{244} The motivation was similar in Stefański's case, except with the added dimension of attempting to create an experience of Pure Form within a home. The result of Stefański's experiment was an domestic heterotopia, where both the rules of regular life and the conventions of theatrical avant-garde were broken, blended and reworked.


Separate Theatre (Teatr Osobny) was a Warsaw apartment theatre, formed after the dissolution of Theatre on Tarczyńska Street. It functioned from 1958 to 1963 in the home of the poet and playwright Miron Białoszewski at Plac Dąbrowskiego 7, apartment 13. This new project was, in some ways, an extension of the Theatre on Tarczyńska, although only Białoszewski remained out of the original Tarczyńska group and all formal association with the previous project was deliberately severed. The new collective comprised of the artist Ludmiła Murawska, writer Ludwig Hering and Białoszewski. The choice to name the project Separate Theatre was both an artistic statement and an intentional reference to the rift between Białoszewski and Tarczyńska's main creator, Lech Emfazy Stefański. Although the Separate Theatre was a collaborative effort between Murawska, Hering and Białoszewski, the project is known primarily as Miron's, due not only to the fact that it took place in his home, but also because of the 1971 publication of the collection of plays by Białoszewski titled *Teatr Osobny*, with an introduction by Artur Sandauer as well as Białoszewski's own small introductory note. The book contained all the plays written by Miron for the apartment theatre, including the plays performed by Białoszewski in Theatre on Tarczyńska.

Miron Białoszewski is primarily known to English-speaking readers as the author of *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising* (1977). However, in Poland, he was very successful as a poet and well-known for his

\textsuperscript{243}“'Everything must be transformed in a way no one has ever seen before,' proclaims his prototype artist character in the 1925 *Beelzebub Sonata* (34).” (Kiebuzińska:1993:66)

\textsuperscript{244}ibid

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short, avant-garde plays – as Gassowski puts it: “Białoszewski made his debut three times and each
time the debut was loud: as a poet, playwright and prose writer.”245 One of the reasons for this
discrepancy – indeed, probably the main reason – is that the writer took pleasure in linguistic
experimentation of the kind that renders a work nearly untranslatable. In this way, he can be compared
to the Sasha Sokolov or E.E.Cummings. Białoszewski's ability to work in several genres and his
tendency to make up words is also reminiscent of Daniil Kharms. Białoszewski is a curious character in
Polish literature. His nocturnal lifestyle was notorious in the artistic circles of post-war Warsaw.
Olgierd Wołyński recalls that “…Miron, as a night person, was quite troublesome for a person
normally working.”246 He is frequently referred to as a private poet, someone who consciously selected
everyday objects and occurrences as subjects of this work, believing that only the minutiae of the
everyday were truly free of ideology. Grácia Kerényi points out the difficulty of categorizing
Białoszewski's theatre work as well when she writes that “…Białoszewski's plays are grotesques,
sometimes tragi-grotesques, sometimes closely related to satire, parody”247. In this way, in Kerényi's
view, Separate Theatre can only be categorized as the “…'other' theatre of our times…”248

Jacek Kopciński sums Białoszewski's theatrical career as eight years of theatre-making: three with
Teatr na Tarczyńskiej and five with Teatr Osobny in his apartment on Plac Dąbrowskiego249. Although
these are Białoszewski's primary apartment theatre projects, the poet was theatrically active in many
other ways: he performed his program in television, recorded his work for radio (Wyprawy krzyżowe),
toured Poland (also as part of Teatr Osobny). Overall, Białoszewski's theatrical activity can be divided
into two phases. Teatr na Tarczyńskiej, which we discussed earlier in this chapter, and Teatr Osobny,
which we will address in this section. As a certain extension to his theatrical activities, we can add his
film experiments known as “flimikowanie” and Kabaret Kici Koci.

Białoszewski's Teatr Osobny produced five “seasons” (programs, they were called) or five sets of
performances and, not dissimilar to the previous project, ended due to alleged personal
misunderstandings between the three participants – Hering, Murawska and Białoszewski himself. In his
to-the-point encyclopedia of late-20th century Polish playwrights, Szczepan Gassowski sums up: “This
theatre was an unofficial, social event, though later sanctioned and sponsored by the Student Club
"Hybrydy”250. It worked for eight years251 and dissolved in a natural way. However, according to the
poet's calculations, about 14,000 viewers attended the nearly 300 presentations in Warsaw and in the
country, so despite the unsystematic character and exceptional audiences of the audience, it was a
phenomenon that caused some ferment in our artistic life.”252

The content of each program was a set of several “microdramas” (mikrodramaty) and poems. These
pieces did not have a specific plot, ordered sequence of events or cause-and-effect structure. The
starting point of a show was usually a linguistic ambiguity or a play on words, at times with well-
known literary/historical references. Gassowski notes that this “a small volume of plays – a dozen or so
dramatic miniatures – was an important event, despite being bound to the activity of his little theatre

245Gassowski:1979, 89
246O. Wołyński in conversation with Sobolewski, Hanna Kirchner:1996, 190
247Kerényi:1973, 8
248ibid
249Kopciński:1997, 13
250The name of this club, connected both to Białoszewski’s and Stefański's hybrid projects, continues to feel somewhat
serendipitous to me.
251Gassowski treats both Tarczyńska and Osobny projects as one when it comes to Białoszewski's playwriting period. This
is why, from his point of view, the activity is eight years – Tarczyńska + Teatr Osobny
252Gassowski:1979, 89
and created as if for literary play only, ignoring the then-popular and universally binding poetics.”  

The location was an unassuming post-war building on Plac Dąbrowskiego, where Białoszewski got an apartment in 1958. Although today the location is considered central, at the time it felt to the poet like the edge of the city. The apartment contained one room, a kitchen and a bathroom. Białoszewski moved in it with his partner, the sculptor Leszek Soliński and converted the kitchen into a salon, filling with with Soliński's artwork, thus turning a one-room flat into two. Wołyński, a friend of the poet, recalls the interior: “In the hall, a poster with sticks from Wiwisekcja, hanging on the door of this white wardrobe in the wall. A crowd sitting in a room on the floor. To your right side – piles of junk. To your left - a wall with angels. Black-shaded windows. Full to the brim. A lot of people going in and out. Who only did I not meet there then! By 1963, the tradition of meeting was reborn, with the so-called “Tuesdays” which are remembered by their “family atmosphere”. The “atmosphere” is cited also by Gassowski as one of the main reasons for the project's success: “[the project] aroused interest for several reasons: the oddity of the aura that pervaded the little theatre, a sense of sensation, 'forbidden fruit' or the very name of the already famous poet (though he did not have a single volume of poems yet, he was already winning competitions in 1953...)”  

Ambiguity/hybrids and ritual were two of the most important elements of Białoszewski's microdramas. Within these hybrids was a close interlacing of ritual with everyday life and intimate self-identity. As Sobolewski points out: “The need for theatre and theatricalization of one's life permeated the environment. It was a function of individualism, a kind of private liturgy. It created a protective layer defending against the great theatre of ideology that was playing out all around.” Indeed, the idea of private liturgy – i.e. a public ritual carried out in privacy – is another example of the hybrid. Jacek Kopciński quotes Białoszewski providing a “…formula for his theatrical work” in a conversation with Leszek Elektorowicz: “It is not a poetic narrative, but a dramatic synthesis in which the metaphor is realized on the stage”. The idea of synthesis is key to understanding Białoszewski's theatre – for it is also a synthesis of place and time, where time is manipulated theatrically but place remains a private home. In other words, just as it is not a staged poem, it is not a theatre piece taking place in a home but separate from it – it is synthesis, a hybrid of the two which then produces a desired effect.  

For instance, Wiwisekcja (which was staged at both Tarczyńska and Osobny, Fig.2.5-2.6) opens at an “empty amphitheater, with a jade-blue sky background” and a chorus yelling a series of random Greek words off-stage:  

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VOICES OFF-STAGE, festively, like at a fairground

Pa-nathenaic Games!
Ob-lations!
Cly-temnestra!
Beta! Beta!

Enter ten Fingers dressed in black robes and white collars, Rembrandt-style
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253Gassowski:1979, 89  
254Olgierd Wołyński in conversation with Sobolewski, Hanna Kirchner:1996, 191  
255Karpowicz:2013, 242  
256Gassowski:1979, 89  
257Sobolewski:2012, 234  
258Kopciński:1997, 12  
259Ibid  
52
The festive tone, the mention of the sky and the ancient Greek words evoke a fairground and a Greek amphitheater – both large, outdoor, open spaces. This linguistic vastness is juxtaposed with the miniature, confined setting of this “monodrama for ten fingers”, which is an old box filled with small household objects (i.e. a hanger, a cup), surrounded by an audience tightly packed in a crowded, windowless room. This way, the performance is a hybrid and a paradox from the very onset. At the same time, the appeals to the goddess Hecate and the Sibyls, accompanied with the appearance of solemnly dressed fingers (the author's) lend the opening of the performance an eerie, ritualistic feel. Note further that the costumes are “Rembrandt-style”, in other words – 17th century Dutch. This costume detail, combined with the already contrasting set and text, further heightens the atemporality of the performance. The effect is at once humorous and unsettling, disorienting.

The two juxtaposing spaces – the vast amphitheater and the crowded apartment – are what, much later, in 2006, will be defined as the spaces for a post-dramatic theatre. In his seminal work defining what is now commonly known as postdramatic theatre, Hans-Thies Lehmann writes:

In general it can be said that dramatic theatre has to prefer a 'medium' space. Tendentially dangerous to drama are the huge space and the very intimate space. In both cases, the structure of the mirroring is jeopardized. For the stage frame functions like a mirror that ideally allows a homogenous world of the viewers to recognize itself in the equally coherent world of the drama. A theatre, on the contrary, in which not the transmission of sign and signal but what Grotowsky called 'the proximity of living organisms' dominates perception, runs counter to the distance and abstraction essential to drama. If one reduces the distance between performers and spectators to such an extent that the physical and physiological proximity (breath, sweat, panting, movement of the musculature, cramp, gaze) masks the mental signification, then a space of a tense centripetal dynamic develops, in which theatre becomes a moment of shared energies instead of transmitted signs.

In other words, the allegedly remarkable atmosphere that audiences of apartment theaters recall with such fondness and cite as the reason why they went back for more, is the result of this centripetal dynamic. This would also explain the need for ambiguity, which for Bialoszewski was a deliberate concern, especially linguistic ambiguity. In this sense, he sought to remove or muddle theatrical signs (speech, prop, set, character) by lending ambiguity to each of those elements. Lehmann describes this as aesthetics of undecidability. This way, the experience became theatre of energies shared among those present and not available to those on the outside, making it a deterritorialized space in a sense of something that lies outside of the system, not going with it, not going against it. In cognitive terms, we can talk about the alterations to the blends which produce an imaginary space available only to the participants – it is a similar process in regular theatre, but here the space altered is not one traditionally assigned (i.e. theatre building), but an everyday home.


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260Białoszewski:1971, 19
261Lehmann:2006, 150
We now move from Poland to former Czechoslovakia to address a project based in the Czech city of Brno. Šlépěj v okně was a title for a series of theatrical and poetic evenings that took place in a Brno apartment between 1973 and 1975, under the subtitle “performances of work by friends in the apartment of Jiří Frištauf.” The evenings took place at Veveří 54, in a first-floor apartment belonging to the parents of one of the organizers, Jiří Frištauf. Organized by three Moravian poets, led by Jiří Kuběňa, the series ran for six sessions and fell apart after attracting the attention of the State Security (StB). While the Theatre on Tarczyńska can be examined as an example of a heterotopia created out of incongruity between the apartment space and the performative activity, Šlépěj v okně is a building block in the deterritorialized personal mythology of its organizers, especially Kuběňa.

In the Introduction and earlier in this chapter, I explained the difference between narrative and non-narrative identity. I also discussed how identity relates to and is continually reinforced by the domestic space. I outlined cognitive scientist Mark Turner’s approach to identity as a compression of a large amount of data and how this compression has a tendency to smooth over paradoxes and erase inconsistencies, resulting in a neat narrative of our personalities. However, the paradoxes do not necessarily go away – and to this end, I quoted Gilles Deleuze, who divided reality into two lines: a narrative history and a “molecular flow.” I further introduced Václav Cílek’s understanding of inscape as an inner world in constant interplay with the outside environment and defined the gray zone, or an “alternative universe that existed beyond the official sphere” in 1970s Czechoslovakia. These notions will be useful now, as we examine the Brno project.

The instigator of the project, or as Jiří Frištauf called him, “the impresario,” was Jiří Kuběňa, whose personality – narrative or not – did not fit neatly into the narratives of the 1970s Czechoslovak system. In discussion of his youth, Kuběňa is a self-defined outsider. Despite searching for a role model, the young poet “… did not bow down anywhere, did not suck up – what’s most important: was not in the least willing to adapt his views, his way of writing, his understanding of Eros, religion, poetry to anyone else’s.” As a result of his unwillingness to compromise, Kuběňa was not officially published until the 1989 revolution, and the general attitude of the accepted art world towards him was far from friendly. For instance, when discussing the rare presentation of his poetry in Brno’s Centre for the Arts (Dům umění) in the early 1950s, the poet admits that he and his friends were “more like intruders … secret conspirators.”

Šlépěj v okně as an apartment theatre can be seen as a direct outcome of the peculiarity of Kuběňa’s person, who remains – in more than one way – a personification of a heterotopia (a space of otherness contained within one individual). The poet’s identity is less a clash of irreconcilable paradoxes than a swirl of opposites into one fluid otherness. Born in Prague but raised in Moravia, rejected by the

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262 Jiří Kuběňa (b. 1936) is a Moravian poet and art historian, a representative of the so-called generation of thirty-sixes (generace šestatřicátníků, Cz.) or those born in 1936. The group included, among others, Václav Havel, Pavel Švanda, Viola Fischerová and Věra Linhartová.  
263 Petr:1996, 64  
264 Ji. Kuběňa in Petr:1996  
265 Petr:1996, 49  
266 Petr:1996, 48  
267 “spiše jako vetřelci, Plaváčkové, tajni spiklenci” (Petr:1996, 49)  
Plaváček is the main character in a Czech fairy tale Tři zlaté vlasy děda Vševěda [Three Golden Hairs of the All-Knowing Elder] written by Karel Jaromír Erben at the end of 19th century. Plaváček's Fairy Godmother predicts that he will marry a princess despite his humble birth. This news, of course, reaches the King who spends the entire fairy tale trying to do away with the poor lad, only to give up and let him marry the princess at end anyway. As used by Kuběňa, Plaváček's name evokes an atmosphere of “official art's” disdain and nonacceptance of the young poets. Kuběňa's choice of this particular character is also curious when we take into account the poet's obsession with liquids and fluidity – Plaváček was so named because, Moses-like, he was sent afloat a river in a basket. The name can be loosely translated as “little swimmer.”
official literary milieu until the Velvet Revolution, active in Moravian Samizdat but – in his own words – decidedly not a dissident, Kuběna seems to exist between two worlds. He defines problems of continuity, fluidity and finding a place of belonging as major themes of concern in his work; he also gives importance to his astrological sign – Gemini, or the twins.268

In his work on deterritorialization, Yurchak devotes an entire chapter269 to such “deterritorialized” lifestyles. As an example, Yurchak gives us the poet Joseph Brodsky, who “… did not go against the regime …” but simply “… did not notice it.”270 Although it would not be entirely true to assign to Kuběna the same level of remote non-involvement as one would to Brodsky, it is safe to say that the Moravian poet’s personal narrative and his work are closely tied to the private, non-definable and non-narrative aspects of existence. Since a deterritorialized lifestyle rejects conventional identity markers, a unique personal mythology is required to take their place. In Kuběna’s case, this mythology had a deeply mystical feel – what he called being “at home in an ancient sense.”271 At the same time, it was a mythology of private spaces and encounters. This combination of the ancient and the everyday endowed the latter with a certain magic for Kuběna, and an apartment could become a heterotopia, rendered as such by what Kuběna considered to be mythological forces within.

Domestic spaces were assigned an important place in Kuběna’s personal mythology. Alongside fluidity and outsider status, homes (belonging to him and others) receive a status of identity markers in Kuběna’s memory. We see this in the way he uses rooms and spaces to formulate key memories, in the way he identifies his roots and finally, in the way it is reflected in his work – including the Šlépěj v okně project. For instance, in a 2006 interview with the young poet Pavel Petr272, Kuběna repeatedly frames his memories by describing apartments and houses. The interview begins with Kuběna’s recollection of two early, key memories: his Prague origins and his first meeting with Václav Havel, who was then only an aspiring teenage writer wholly unaware of his future role as the first president of the independent Czechoslovakia. Both accounts are nested, for the poet’s memory, in detailed descriptions of homes – the street, the building number, the floor and which room was where in the apartment. For example, here is how the poet replies to a question about his return to Prague (his birthplace) in the 1950s, after having spent his youth in Moravia:

For me, very soon, actually from the very beginning, there appeared a very specific nostalgia for Prague, to be precise for my beloved Hanspaulka, street Nad Šárkou, garden and house number 34 (č.p. 753), especially for the apartment in its second and third – attic – floors …274

269See Yurchak:2016, 255
270Yurchak is quoting the writer Sergei Dovlatov’s notes on Brodsky: “Он не боролся с режимом. Он его не замечал.” (Юрчак:2016, 256)
271Petr:1996, 46
272 ibid
273Číslo popisné – an identification number given to Czech buildings in addition to the street number. Officially recognized in 1770, the numbers indicate where the structure is listed in the city records and is typically found on a red plaque under or next to the street number. Although the majority of Prague citizens today will not tell you this number when asked for their address, children pre-revolution were taught to remember both the house and the identification number. Here, neither number is particularly important for the conversation, which indicates the significance of them to the poet – he deems it necessary to recite his entire address, i.d. number included because it is a sequence he learned in the earliest childhood and repeating it unlocks a set of memories.
When discussing Havel, Kuběna says: “[T]he first time I saw Václav Havel was in a so-called ‘nest,’ a back room in his parents’ apartment, on the fourth floor of the house number 2000 on Engels Quay.” The year was 1953 and both Kuběna and Havel were 17 years old. Just as he does with Havel, Kuběna connects memories of other members of his poetic group through details of their homes – for instance, the writer and translator Marie-Louise Langrová, who was a friend “at whose place there were romantic gatherings with candles and where people fell in love with each other”; the artist Vera Fridrichová, whose influence was tremendous on Kuběna and who invited him to her “legendary studio on Česká street 13, on the top floor (from which one could see ... the tower of St. Jakub’s Cathedral)”; and the country home of Václav Havel’s parents, where a 17-year-old Kuběna escaped the “nervous atmosphere after Stalin’s death.”

In Kuběna’s musings, the positive recollections of private places and faces are juxtaposed with official places – the university, the aforementioned Dům umění in Brno. Life in apartments, studios and houses (and the people who inhabited them) formed Kuběna’s world-view much more than formal institutions. Everything important happened in private. Describing Soviet communal apartments, Svetlana Boym notes the “contrast between the official, cold collectivity and the sincerity and hospitality of the ‘own’.” Although the Czech living conditions, even in the 1950s, compared favorably to the Soviet communal apartment, we can extend the notion of this contrast to explain the peculiarity of Kuběna’s “belonging.” Indeed, the not-entirely-translatable notion of “svoih” or “one’s own” (своих) evokes at once a cozy reality of a small private world and a chilly vastness of everything that is not “ours.” In other words, a home refers as much to people and a conceptual wholeness as to a specific place. “Svoi,” and this does not escape Boym’s attention, are not just found on the street – they are safely contained in an apartment, in a warm and cozy room. Seen in light of this observation, Kuběna’s “ancient sense” of belonging seems less of a riddle – it is not belonging to a country or a political party, but belonging to a clan, fitting into a friendly circle.

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed in some detail the relationship between the non-narrative self and the home. More specifically, I focused on the importance of ambiguous, non-narrative details in identity construction. Šlépěj v okně – a project as definitive for Kuběna’s artistic career as his poetry – was an example of such ambiguity, which entered a home of a friend and elevated Kuběna’s circle to a mythical status through alienation. Šlépěj v okně was inspired by an apartment of a friend. In the interviews collected by Petr, Jiří Kuběna is credited with initiating the idea along with another Moravian poet, Jaroslav Frič. In Kuběna’s words, the project came about in the Fall of 1973, during a period of the poet’s eight-year-long artistic hiatus and when Frištauf presented an opportunity to do something in his parents’ apartment. According to Taussiková, Kuběna was excited by Frišt auf’s...
spacious Art Nouveau home, where all the rooms could be connected to make one large space. According to Kuběna’s recollections, the name was prompted by an unexplained appearance of a bare footprint on the outside of the window glass. Taussiková further specifies that the footprint belonged to a child, and the window was five meters off the ground (although Kuběna estimates seven). It was winter. Kuběna also explains that, beyond immortalizing the mystical footprint, the name carried poetical connotations — on the one hand a “... somewhat futuristic character, something like Mayakovsky’s poem Cloud in Pants ...” and on the other “... most importantly there was a Demlian reminiscence – Footprints, for us, similarly to Deml, it was about resonance, continuity, connection.” Šlépěj v okně thus began with a myth, with the unfamiliar and the strange literally entering the domestic space.

The format of these evenings presented a hybrid of poetic readings and short theatrical skits. For the latter, Kuběna prepared paper masks (Fig.2.7). These are stylized faces and look as though the author intended to make tribal masks for his own small clan. They are also reminiscent of the Green Man (Fig.2.8), a figure in Bohemian mythology that Cílek traces at least to the 1300s. The function of the Green Man remains vague — the best explanation is that he is a keeper of the woods — but he appears in cathedral constriction across what is now the Czech Republic with apparent regularity. Cílek connects this figure to similar characters in other mythologies, such as Jack in the Green, and writes that from him and similar beings comes “imaginary culture,” which is a necessary element in religion that takes belief beyond direct prayer and adds a new dimension to it. Gothic elements of one of Kuběna’s masks suggests that the comparison of these objects to the Green Man is more than accidental. Interpreted in this light, Kuběna’s masks evoke an ancient mythical being, traditionally an element of Gothic cathedral architecture, into a home of his friend. In this way, the apartment becomes a cave, where a circle of one’s own meets around a fire to encounter a mythical and powerful being. The apartment, through this ritual, is now deterritorialized and replaced with an imaginary space of the author’s making.

2.5 Chapter Conclusion

At the start of this chapter, I cited Bachelard’s description of a house as something imagined and Lefebvre's notion of the domestic space as a complex, imaginary one. I connected these thoughts to Cílek's concept of internal landscape (inscape) and Turner's views on how the domestic space weaves into the cognitive network of a human self — an idea intuited much earlier (prior to and independently

282Art Noveau or Secese in Czech (end of 19th – early 20th century) buildings are found in Prague and Brno along with many other European cities and are known for their spacious dwellings. Kuběna – and, we shall later see, the Polish artists of Theatre on Tarczyńska and Teatr Osobny, were inspired to create theatre in such apartments, claiming to see something theatrical in them. In fact, this notion is probably not accidental, given the fact that one of the chief aims of Art Nouveau architecture was to combine art with everyday life. In case of apartment theatres mentioned in this study, the architectural experiment of Art Nouveau can be considered a success.

283“...asijsko-ruský – trochu futuristický charakter něco jako Majakovského poéma Oblak v kalhotech...” (Petr:1996)

284Jakub Deml (1978 – 1961) was a Czech writer, poet and a Catholic priest. His work is considered to be an example of Surrealism. Kuběna lists Deml, along with another Czech surrealist Vítězslav Nezval, as one of his primary poetic influences. Deml's Šlépěje (Footprints) was an irregular series of samizdat (self-published) journals collecting his thoughts, criticisms, responses to critics and friends as well as stories from his life.

285“...hlavně tam zaznivala ta reminiscence demlovská – Šlépěje, podobně jako Demlovi i nám šlo o resonanci, kontinuitu, sousedlost.” (Petr:1996)

286Here and below: Taussiková in Petr:1996, 46 -47

287Cílek:2010, 154
of Turner) by Lefebvre. I illustrated how the urban apartment, in general terms and in the Soviet context, presents an intricate synthesis of political, cultural and cognitive impulses reflected in literature, theatre and film. Finally, I discussed case studies of projects that took place in apartments.

Here, I would like to address how to interpret the interjection of my case studies into the imagined domestic space. What and how did these projects create by introducing new elements into the cognitive blend of the apartment? Earlier in this study, I introduced the notion of imaginary worlds. I propose that J.P. Wolf's ideas on what constitutes an imaginary world overlap with both Yurchak's concept of vnenahodimost and Foucault's heterotopia, in more ways than one. I further propose that an understanding of projects such as Theatre on Tarczyńska lies at the intersection of these three notions.

Imaginary worlds are a wide category and so share a long list of characteristics. For this chapter, it is important to address two: the presence of a foundational reality and the aspect of interaction. Many of the imaginary (Secondary) worlds exist in a relationship to the real (Primary) world, which they frequently invert. In addition, some secondary worlds are interactive – in other words, they exist because they are shared by a group and, consequently, referred to as participatory worlds.

Below, I examine Theatre on Tarczyńska, Teatr Osobny and Šlépěj v Okně in the context of imaginary worlds theory in regards to a Primary world and participatory elements, respectively.

When it comes to their relationship to location, I propose that the apartment can be considered a primary world. Apartment projects could not exist without the domestic space, which they change and invert. In relation to location, apartment performances present a paradox within a paradox: the first of the paradoxes being the act of public performance within a space intended for private life; the second paradox being the hybrid of ritual (repeatable, formalized, reassuring) and ambiguity, both linguistic and material (malleable, uncertain, flexible, unsettling). In a larger sense, both of these paradoxes confront structured and rehearsed cultural performance – theatrical and ritualistic – with the flux of everyday life. This confrontation produces spatial/temporal ripples resulting in a deterritorializing effect. Another way to put this would be to look at apartment projects through the prism of Lefebvre's triad in combination with imaginary world theories. Projects like Theatre on Tarczyńska not only used the physical characteristics of an apartment but also the socialist ideals of a communal, shared space and built on them to create something else. In this way, they played off both the physical and the mental aspects of space, as defined by Lefebvre, to create an alternate social space at the site of the original. From this point of view, the projects can also be seen as what Wolf calls overlaid worlds. An overlaid world, in Gerard Hynes' definition, occurs when a “location may still be considered part of the Primary World” because “the level of difference from the Primary World is sufficiently small.” In other words, an overlaid world is one that is grounded in physical reality, such as an apartment, but is “sufficiently defamiliarized and altered to count” as a secondary world, such as when household objects are converted into theatre benches and abstract props. I propose that the double inversion of the physical (apartment) and mental (private site) spaces allowed for the level of defamiliarization necessary to create a separate “experiential realm,” which is another definition of an imaginary world by Hynes.

Wolf's et al definition of imaginary worlds includes one that sees them as participatory spaces that, while fictional, are integrally connected to physical reality. In fact, Wolf uses children's play as an

288Wolf:2018
289Hynes in Wolf:2018, 4
290Hynes in Wolf:2018, 5
291Hynes in Wolf:2018, 4
example of a participatory or interactive imaginary world in the similar vein as Foucault, whom I discuss below. In his essay on participatory imaginary worlds Matthew Freeman examines “the practice of producing and engaging with imaginary worlds that are interactive or participatory in nature...” Freeman relies on the definition of participatory culture originally provided by Henry Jenkins and writes that “participatory culture is characterized by particular ideals” which include, in Jenkins' words, “strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others” and the members' belief in “some degree of social connection with one another...” All the projects I described above, beyond having an audience, contained a set of ritualized behaviors to which the audience members were expected to subscribe – this included the already-mentioned invitation cards in Theatre on Tarczyńska or the ritualistic masks in Kubêna's performances. Ritualization is hinted at in Białoszewski's nods to Greek theatre, while Kubêna's project is founded on a shared mythology of the mysterious footprint. Additionally, group dynamic has been remarked as of paramount importance by the participants of all three projects.

To what extent are these worlds heterotopias?

In his treatise on heterotopias, Foucault wrote: “Bachelard’s monumental work and the descriptions of phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well.” This aspect of the imaginary in defining a heterotopia follows Foucault from his earliest description of the term. Peter Johnson cites Foucault's radio broadcast, writing that “his opening illustrations of the concept refer to various children’s imaginative games, mentioning tents and dens in gardens as well as all the games played on or under the covers of the parents’ bed. The children’s inventive play produces a different space that at the same time mirrors what is around them. The space reflects and contests simultaneously.” At the same time, in Foucault's understanding, “heterotopias are always real” and “do not exist independently of our existence or our ways of knowing.” In this sense, apartment performances can be interpreted as heterotopias because there is a paradox hidden within the idea of a private performance event. This paradox is at once reminiscent of Foucault's mirror heterotopia (“I see myself, where I am not...”) and the imaginary worlds' propensity at inverting or juxtaposing themselves to a familiar reality. Both interpretations offer a glimpse into the alienating mechanisms of apartment theaters. This alienation and the subsequent renewed understanding of the familiar allow to interpret my case studies as imaginary worlds that are heterotopical. In other words, if a heterotopia reinterprets the site of the real by reconfiguring its elements, then Theatre on Tarczyńska, Separate Theatre and Footprint on the Window are heterotopias because they alienate their physical environment to produce a counter-site to the original location. To be more specific, for instance, Theatre on Tarczyńska used the architectural elements of Stefański's home as a theatre stage to make a hybrid place, neither private or public (or both at once).

How do these projects relate to Yurchak's vnenahodimost?

I have already mentioned inversion as a key characteristic of apartment projects. So far, I have mostly discussed the inversion of the physical space – the apartment, which became a theatre, in other words, a

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292 Freeman in Wolf:2018, 198
293 ibid
294 Jenkins quoted by Freeman in Wolf:2018, 198
295 Foucault:1984, 2
296 Johnson:2006, 76
297 Topinka:2010, 4
private location used as a public venue. However, inversion also occurred on the level of what Lefebvre called mental level, which I mentioned earlier. Rather than inverting the material plane, this second inversion was integrally linked to the socio-historical context of the project participants. This happened in two ways: one, the participants adopted socialist ideals of communality but endowed them with their own meaning; and two – the participants turned on its head the imaginary Soviet apartment as popularly depicted in films and paintings, i.e. a spacious, sunny and straightforward imaginary space was turned on its head into a darkened, stuffy and complex. These two inversions correspond to Yurchak's definition of deterritorialized spaces because they relied on forms provided by the system (communal shared space, imaginary apartment in soc realism) but endowed them with their own meanings. Therefore, projects such as Theatre on Tarczyńska or Footprint on the Window can be interpreted as deterritorialized, however with a certain nuance. Considering Wolf's imaginary worlds, my case studies begin to resemble micro-versions of Yurchak's Imaginary West and so, again, can be seen micro-worlds. However, a thorough discussion on whether my case studies constitute separate imaginary worlds in the context of Yurchak's vnenahodimost requires an overview of the remaining case study, which did not take place in apartments and is a type of place defined, in Czech scholarship, as strange places. This I turn to in the following chapter before drawing final conclusions.