didaskalia
gazeta teatralna

From the issue: **English Issue 2023**
DOI: 10.34762/nr6f-vw54
Source URL:
https://didaskalia.pl/en/article/reconfigurations-masculinity-recent-polish-theatre

/ MASCULINITIES: MAPPING THE FIELD

Reconfigurations of Masculinity in Recent Polish Theatre

Wiktoria Tabak | Doctoral School in the Humanities, Jagiellonian University, Kraków

Based on selected performance pieces (including *Autobiografia na wszelki wypadek* [Autobiography Just in Case] by Michał Buszewicz, *Woyzeck* by Grzegorz Jaremko, *Chcieliśmy porozmawiać o męskości, ale zostaliśmy przyjaciółmi [*We Wanted to Talk about Masculinity, but We Became Friends] by the Grupa Performatywna Chłopaki, *Bromance* by Michał Przybyła and Dominik Więcek, *Halka* by Anna Smolar and *Ojcowie* [Fathers] by Błażej Biegasiewicz), the author analyzes transformations in the ways of representing masculinities in recent Polish theatre. In her opinion, it has been possible for the past few years to notice both a marked increase in interest in thematizing male emotionality, fragility, caring, tenderness or intimacy in Polish theatre and a radicalization of angry patriarchal masculinity, especially among those who reject the perspectives of institutional criticism or the #metoo movement. In this article, however, the author focuses solely on outlining the historical conditions that constituted patriarchal masculinity with all its qualities and on analyzing feminist-formed masculinities in Polish theatre using methodologies developed by feminist theorists (bell hooks and Karla Elliott) and by researchers associated with the field of critical studies of men and masculinities (Michael Kimmel, Raewyn Connell, Jason Wilson, Erik Anderson and Paco Abril).

Keywords: masculinities in Polish theatre; feminism; representation; toxic masculinity; patriarchy; care politics

1.

In recent years I have noticed two interconnected trajectories in Polish theatre. On the one hand, theatre-makers increasingly turn to male tenderness and intimacy, dialogue with phantasmagorical representations of hegemonic masculinity[1] (including stereotypical models of fatherhood) and problematize forms of male intimacy, erotic and non-erotic, and new types of emotional communities. They are more inclined to break down representations of toxic masculinity, defined by Michael Kimmel as a set of harmful, both for men and for society as a whole, cultural norms that legitimize and perpetuate negative behaviours involving dominance, aggression, violence and sexuality (1995). At the same time, we are witnessing a violent (and often public) radicalization of mad patriarchal masculinity,[2] particularly among those in denial of institutional criticism and of the #MeToo movement, and among some directors who struggle to accept the fact that they are no longer given carte blanche to use sexual harassment and psycho-physical violence as legitimate work methods in an artistic process presumed to produce masterpieces.

I mention the interplay between the two paths, because my position is not unlike that of Raewyn Connell, who has convincingly demonstrated that masculinities are not (and cannot be) essentialized or teased out of the contexts in which they are constructed, but they remain splintered, tangled and interdependent. Different types of masculinity produce, transform and define one another under the influence of an array of geopolitical, cultural, social, symbolic and economic factors and as a result of interaction or confrontation with other models of masculinity (2005).

I regard the radicalization of mad patriarchal masculinity in Polish theatre as

not unlike what Michael Kimmel refers to as aggrieved entitlement – that is, a set of mechanisms via which angry white men, consciously or unconsciously, nurture a sense of hurt stemming from having been stripped of their former economic status, power, privilege, attention and symbolic position, all of which have now been passed to women, non-binary individuals, queer persons, migrants, refugees and racial or ethnic minorities, as well as to men who do not conform to the standard of hegemonic masculinity (2013, p. 32). Driven by 'aggrieved entitlement,' these guardians of patriarchy and the *status quo* are characterized by anger, violence, resentment, refusal to adapt to new social norms and by affective and radical opposition to anti-discrimination policies.[3]

Examples from the Polish context are not particularly difficult to come by. One is Andrzej Chyra's reply, widely reported in the media, to the question posed by a Campus Poland participant who asked him whether young artists should be taught social responsibility in schools. Not only did the actor answer the question in the negative, but he rose from his seat and exclaimed angrily,

> Are you guys nuts? Are you now going to do a nationwide campaign [against] 'violence in the theatre'? Excuse me but what's the point? Who do you want to rip into with nationwide campaigns. This is totally sick,' 'do you want to teach artists how they should behave?'[4]

I mention this, because I want to outline certain trends and illustrate my observations, even if I do not intend to focus on examining the manifestations of mad patriarchal masculinity in contemporary theatre but to sketch the historical processes of constructing masculinity, which, as it

were, have institutionalized patriarchal ways of thinking about men and masculinities, the consequences of which we still live with today, and to investigate the most recent ways of representing masculinity in Polish theatre, which I believe are predominantly feminist.[5] In this article I consider the notion of masculinity as a term bringing together a particular set of cultural and social practices, so when I refer to men, I mean all individuals who identify as male. My essay is not meant to offer an exhaustive treatment of this vast subject. Rather, it is intended as an introduction to further research and as a mapping out of potential directions for investigation.

2.

In her now classic treatise, *Masculinities*, Raewyn Connell locates masculinities in a centuries-long process in which modern gender orders have crystalized, arguing that they have been primarily shaped by factors such as the rise of global empires and of the global capitalist economy, the ascendence of Western Europe and then North America, and the asymmetrical confrontation of various gender models in colonized territories (p. 185). In her view, the configuration of the social practices collectively referred to as masculinity have been particularly affected by four factors. The first factor is a cultural shift that can be traced back to the Renaissance transformation of medieval Catholicism, the Protestant Reformation and the decline of the monastic system, which led to a new understanding of sexuality, with heterosexuality becoming the most respected form of it, and to the emergence of a new approach to the individual which underscored his or her unmediated relationship with God, promoting individualism and the notion of an autonomous self (p. 186). These shifts in turn influenced later thinkers such as Descartes and Kant, who defined rationality and science in opposition to nature and emotions, hence passion, emotionality and

instability came to be identified with phantasmagorical femininity, while reason and force became equated with phantasmagorical masculinity; masculinity later became associated with Western civilization, which enabled the emergence of a cultural link between the legitimization of patriarchy and the legitimization of the highly gendered enterprise of imperialism (p. 187). The second contributing factor was the formation of overseas empires, first by Portugal and Spain, then by the Netherlands, France and England, and later by Germany, Italy and Japan, as well as the creation of land empires by Russia and the United States. The empires were almost entirely governed by men. Discussing the war of conquest, specifically the French conquest of Algeria, in the second volume of *A History of Virility*, Christelle Taraud refers explicitly to the gender dimension of colonial imperialism. She relates that colonizers would frequently enact their male power by debasing and mutilating the bodies of the colonized. The debasement of the conquered indigenous people involved not only bestialization but also feminization. One example is the Algerians who were made to perform acts of allegiance to the European colonizers in which, like in a traditional marriage, the colonized were positioned as the woman (defeated, weak and passive) and the Europeans as the man (conquering, strong and powerful) (2020, p. 295). Thirdly, urban centres developed as hubs of commercial capitalism, the consequences of which were most evident in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, when calculative rationality began to permeate urban culture in the aftermath of the first industrial revolution and the accumulation of wealth from trade, slavery and colonies,

> The entrepreneurial culture and workplaces of commercial capitalism institutionalized a form of masculinity, creating and legitimating new forms of gendered work and power in the

counting-house, the warehouse and the exchange (Connell, p. 188).

In addition to the cultural changes occurring in the cities, the shaping of masculinity in the North Atlantic area during this period was also influenced by the landed gentry, who were closely integrated with the state and strongly engaged in capitalist economic relations. Members of the landed gentry entered local administration and the military where they became army and navy officers as well as rank-and-file soldiers (p. 190). The landed gentry's masculinity tended to be defined by their brutal relationship with the agricultural labour force and its power over home-bound women, reinforcing the institutionalization of aggression- and brutality-based masculinity in the economy and the state. Connell argues, however, that with the spread of industrial economy and the development of bureaucratic states, the economic and political power of the landed gentry declined. In later periods, in metropolitan countries, the gentry were gradually displaced by businessmen and bureaucrats, which was accompanied by the transformation of peasant populations into an urban working class, and new forms of masculinity organized around the ability to earn money and support a home/family emerged as industrial production developed (p. 196). Fourthly, European civil wars led to the perpetuation of patriarchal and hierarchical gender order by highly centralized Western states (p. 189).

Connell refers to the orders of masculinity constructed in Western Europe and North American and in the territories remaining under their influence, but Tomasz Tomasik, who has sought to transpose Connell's ideas to a Polish context,[6] points out that although the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had no overseas colonies, 'the Polish kings, magnates and nobility were no strangers to imperial aspirations' (2016, p. 11).

Following Karla Elliott, I assume, that the margin (periphery, semi-periphery) and the centre always remain in close relationship with each other, affecting and interpenetrating each other (2020). Therefore, although the shifts described above have occurred to a different extent in Poland, the patterns in which patriarchal masculinities constituted themselves in western areas have influenced the forming of local cultural and social models and representations of masculinity.

3.

Between ten and fifteen years ago, it was actors' portrayals of their characters, such as those of Andrzej Chyra and Jacek Poniedziałek in Krzysztof Warlikowski's productions (*Hamlet*, *Bacchae* and *Cleansed*) or Piotr Skiba's work in the plays directed by Krystian Lupa (particularly *The Sleepwalkers*[7] and *Factory 2*), that seemed to set the horizons of alternative representations of masculinity in Polish theatre. At the time, the introduction of male characters whose sexual identity was not fully defined represented a shift from the transparent order of heterosexual masculinity in the theatre and the public sphere, which, as Pierre Bourdieu emphasizes in *Male Domination*, requires no additional commentary or problematization because it is automatically classified as natural, fitting and self-evident (1998).

I assume that the mere presence of queer characters on stage is no longer enough to constitute transgression. What is needed is a display of male emotionality, weakness, fragility and incompatibility with the gender essentialist regimes constructed by patriarchy, and a search for new, more inclusive, relational and open models, and representations of masculinity.[8] I would also link these shifts, in part, to theatre-makers resorting more to autobiographical strategies including confession and candid – yet oscillating

between fiction and non-fiction – tales of personal experiences, failures and traumas, among other tactics.

The feminist model of masculinity, as presented by bell hooks in her book *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*, is underpinned by the assumption that

> feminist masculinity presupposes that it is enough for males to be to have value, that they do not have to 'do,' to 'perform,' to be affirmed and loved. Rather than defining strength as 'power over,' feminist masculinity defines strength as one's capacity to be responsible for self and others. This strength is a trait males and females need to possess (2004, p. 104).

This form of masculinity is oriented towards relationship-building, it emphasizes men's interdependence and emotional sensitivity, and sets itself against patriarchal masculinity marked by frigidity, cynicism, alienation and, not infrequently, the use of psychological or physical violence against others or oneself.

bell hooks discusses at length emotionality and the way patriarchy produces emotionally mutilated men who believe that 'they are more manly if they don't feel' or when they are angry: 'Real men get mad. And their mad-ness, no matter how violent or violating, is deemed natural – a positive expression of patriarchal masculinity' (p. 20). Exhibiting other emotions is bound up with strongly internalized shame and exposure to potential attack from 'real men,' and therefore − to gender-related, symbolic, economic or other harm. hooks argues that:

> The first act of violence that patriarchy demands of males is not violence toward women. Instead patriarchy demands of all males that they engage in acts of psychic self-mutilation, that they kill off the emotional parts of themselves (p. 65).

and that

> Patriarchy rewards men for being out of touch with their feelings. Whether engaged in acts of violence against women and children or weaker men, or in the socially sanctioned violence of war, men are better able to fulfill the demands of patriarchy if they do not feel (pp. 68-69).

4.

The ideas outlined above provide me with a framework to examine Michał Buszewicz's production *Autobiography Just in Case* (Autobiografia na wszelki wypadek, 2020). The dead protagonist of the piece, Michał Buszewicz, is portrayed in accounts of three men (played by Tomasz Cymerman, Daniel Dobosz and Konrad Wosik) hired to clean up his flat. *Autobiography* pivots on the relationship between capitalistic success − which is or may be one of the markers of patriarchal masculinity − and failure in the pursuit of such success, as well as on the process of slow and gradual disarming of male emotionality. Michał couldn't bring himself to cry when his beloved grandmother and his mother died. He spent most of his adult life waiting for recognition and external validation of his work before he eventually received it in the form of a lifetime achievement award. In his relationships with women, there always came a point when other man, seen by Michał as better

than himself, brought his relationships to an end. No one had ever taught Michał how to set boundaries and deal with his own emotions,

> my emotions do not matter in any way. No guy is being accustomed to the fact he has emotions, much less that his emotions matter at all, except for the feeling of being pissed off, which is not my thing. What's left for me then?[9]

Autobiography Just in Case is a story of male loneliness, embarrassment, defeats, anxieties, traumas and a journey to discover and name one's own emotional states. The same themes, but in a slightly different manner, are explored in Grzegorz Jaremko's and Marcin Cecko's *Woyzeck* (2019). The piece revolves around the confrontation of a number of essentially patriarchal models of masculinity represented by the friends of the protagonist (Mateusz Górski) with whom he plays in a garage band. Tamburmajor (Paweł Smagała) is not ashamed of his body, prefers older women and has a domineering personality. Captain (Jan Dravnel) wants to become the CEO of a corporation, because, in his opinion, helping people is about telling them what to do. Doctor (Rafal Maćkowiak) is more focused on anatomy and cool analysis than on interpersonal relations. Woyzeck's dramatic predicament is underpinned by his double confusion evident in his attempts to define his masculinity and in his boundary-less relationship with his overprotective mother (Maria Maj), who feeds him green-pea hummus. Jaremko and Cecko have almost completely rewritten Büchner's text, shifting its focus onto the process of constructing male identities, particularly in adolescence, which occurs, as it were, against the models of masculinity prevalent in one's immediate social surroundings. In their reading, *Woyzeck* is about how much destruction is ultimately caused by

men’s suppression and denial of their own weakness, incapabilities or emotional identities – which are strongly affirmed in patriarchal society – and about the fact that they lack tools and education to counter that suppression.

5.

bell hooks contends that the internalized concept of patriarchal masculinity forces men to cultivate ideals of loneliness and prevents them from building emotional bonds with other men. This pattern is reversed in feminist masculinity which underscores the importance of fostering emotional bonds between men for the healthy functioning of men in society (2022, p. 139). One example corroborating and illustrating these diagnoses is the work of Boys Performative Group (Grupa Performatywna Chłopaki), who search for non-toxic forms of emotional brotherhood based on support rather than competition.

Boys Performative Group’s *We Wanted to Talk About Masculinity but We Became Friends* (Chcieliśmy porozmawiać o męskości, a zostaliśmy przyjaciółmi, 2021) begins with a prologue in which a man stands on one leg and bends his body in all directions in an attempt to keep his balance. His mouth is sealed with a tape bearing the words ‘I've had enough,’ while a series of confessions can be heard from off stage: ‘All my life I have been ready, I couldn’t make a mistake,’ ‘All my life I’ve done what was expected of me,’ ‘I’ve been expected to work and take care of the children. I did both,’ ‘I’ve been expected to get everything done and I got everything done,’ ‘I’ve been expected never to fail, never to fuck up. I’ve never failed, I’ve never fucked up.’

As the show progresses, men get closer to each other physically and mentally, echoing the format of men's circles. Tom speaks of how he identified as a non-binary person for many years before undergoing therapy and discovering that he had feared masculinity, because he saw it as evil and aggressive. Kamil, too, feared men and it had not been until he joined men's circles that he had manged to integrate his two identities, that of a man and that of a non-heteronormative person. Wojtek claims that he would like to break out from the rigid boundaries that divide the feminine and the masculine and to focus on everyone's individual experiences, while Paul points out that men lack social spaces where they can express their emotions.

We Wanted to Talk About Masculinity but We Became Friends is also a collection of stories from different stages of men's lives, which probe disciplining rituals in military schools, confrontation (or lack thereof) with an absent father, toxic fatherhood (and attempts to overcome it while taking care of one's children), male crying, sexual failure, unexpected erections, premature ejaculations and relationships with mothers. Most of these stories are accompanied by choreography in which stiff, trained, disciplined male bodies interact with one another, intertwining, touching, stroking or hugging, revealing a close connection between emotional identity and corporeality, as well as the relational nature of masculinity that requires mutual mindfulness.

Male friendship is also prominent in Michał Przybyła's and Dominik Więcek's *Bromance* (2019). As the play begins, helmeted performers wrestle on a mattress while the rules of a good relationship are announced from off stage: 'don't ridicule a friend in company,' 'hug your friend if the situation calls for it,' 'when you're with a friend, don't pretend to be someone you're not,'

‘enjoy your friend’s success, even when it means your failure,’ ‘be a partner, not a rival, give your friend a helping hand.’

Time and again, the dancers bare their fears and insecurities, including dissatisfaction with their bodies, the shame they feel in the company of men who feel comfortable naked, a sense that their bodies are at odds with the traditional canons of beauty. The masculinities they represent are contrasted with the recurring figure of the patriarchal parent. ‘He made all decisions for us and would not tolerate disagreement,’ says Przybyła, who for most of his adult life was afraid to talk to his dad about being gay. At one point, he even asks an audience member to read out a letter he once wrote to his father,

> I remember you as a reproach against me, against the world and fate. I find it hard to bring back good memories as they are obscured by the moments when you were upset with me. I can’t tell if I love you, if you’re dear to me, who you are to me, you didn’t prepare me for life, for what awaited me. I had to become a man on my own.

Both *Bromance* and *We Wanted to Talk About Masculinity but We Became Friends* reveal the need to seek new, more inclusive forms or communities of intimacy between men which would connect rather than hierarchize cisgender, non-binary, heterosexual, homosexual/queer individuals with one another. In opposition to orthodox masculinities marked by homophobia, compulsive heterosexism, sexism and stoicism, Erik Anderson proposes the term *inclusive masculinities*, or masculinities characterized, among other things, by social fluidity (behaving in ways that would be considered

feminine or homosexual in the orthodox model; seeking to solve problems through dialogue rather than fighting; choosing not to build up respect through violence) or greater intimacy between men, both erotic or non-erotic: hugging, stroking, kissing. Anderson does not single out one model or pattern but discusses a set of processes, a number of forms of masculinity subsumed under the umbrella term of inclusive masculinities which either coexist with orthodox masculinities or destabilize them in some way (2009).

6.

The figure of the parent appears in almost every play referred to in this essay, but the concept of fatherhood is most clearly problematized in Błażej Biegasiewicz's *Fathers* and in the second part of Anna Smolar's and Natalia Fiedorczuk's *Halka*. *Fathers* addresses the recurring figure of a disciplining father whose respect can only be earned with good results, discipline and correct performance of tasks. As a counterpoint to these memories, four actors (Maciek Karczewski, Filip Lipiecki, Marcin Piotrowiak and Mateusz Grodecki) seek to establish a different relationship between father and son – one they would like to build in the future if they become fathers. Worried by the 2016 data which says that Polish fathers spend an average of forty minutes a day with their offspring, they pledge to spend with their children as much time as possible. The actors' commitment to changing the prevailing model of fatherhood is particularly in evidence when they test one another on infants, asking questions about how long a baby feeds only on mother's milk, how it is affected by sugar, when its lower jaw and tongue develop, how long it can drink its mother's milk, how to introduce new foods, expand a baby's diet, control its allergic reactions, change it (step by step) and, most important, how to build an emotional bond with your baby.

Karla Elliott holds that values derived from the domain of care, such as interdependence or relationality, may help neutralize male dominance and positively affect men's development by giving them a sense of being loved and respected without having to compete with other men (2016, p. 252). In Elliott's proposed notion of caring masculinities, derived principally from feminist theories of care, men's competences are not only associated with presiding over a family and providing financial security but also with the ability to care, whereas respect is linked to love rather than the production of patriarchal authority.

Niall Hanlon, who is also cited by Elliott, posits a number of reasons why care-related functions have been underrepresented in traditional models of masculinity. Firstly, care was automatically equated with women, and the position of male carer was seen as subordinate. Secondly, the exercise of care means revealing a feminized part of masculine identity. Thirdly, care implies a full or partial relinquishment of power associated with patriarchal masculinity, which inspires fear and resentment in defenders of the status quo (2012).

Halka, in contrast, juxtaposes two models of fatherhood (and two models of masculinity), which are represented by Jontek (Łukasz Stawarczyk) and Janusz (Radosław Krzyżowski). In the Smolar and Fiedorczuk version of the *Halka* story, Halina (Aleksandra Nowosadko) does not die of a broken heart but runs away leaving her newborn in the care of Jontek, who is not its biological father. Janusz claims that his duty to pay Halina alimony, which he sometimes defaults on, grants him the right to call himself the baby's father and to decide its future: 'Why do you want alimony from me if you want to mould the kid to your will? Do you want to have a Jontek kid, for fuck's sake? It's not a Jontek kid. It's a Janusz kid,' he exclaims during an argument with

Jontek.

Janusz represents a model of fatherhood closely associated with masculinity identified with the ability to financially provide for one's family, while Jontek, in my view, pursues the caring model described by Elliott. In his text 'Men and Caring Masculinities,' Paco Abril, in reference to the Australian researcher's diagnoses, notes that

> the fostering of *caring masculinities must focus on* questioning systems of domination – patriarchy and capitalism – and cut across every sphere of life: the family, education, the world of work, politics, the media and relations between humans and non-humans (2021).

A thorough social reorganization that would definitively challenge patriarchal entitlement which is harmful for many social groups should be based on care and willingness to work together for change (2021).

7.

As Jason Wilson rightly points out in his book *Cry Like a Man* (2019), the toxic representation of men is often reinforced by slogans in the public space, such as 'real men don't cry' or 'be a man, stop whining,' which encourage men to suppress their emotions in order to impress other men and present their masculinity as devoid of softness, fatigue, confusion, insecurity and depression. Therefore, drawing upon low theory, I will regard men talking on stage about their weaknesses, failures and feelings as a gesture of cultural resistance. Addressing the relationship between feminism and failure, Jack Halberstam argues that

> where feminine success is always measured by male standards, and gender failure often means being relieved of the pressure to measure up to patriarchal ideals, not succeeding at womanhood can offer unexpected pleasures (2011, p. 4).

I would like to expand Halberstam's theses to include men who do not conform to hegemonic male standards and I consider the onstage acts of revealing incongruity with patriarchal gender regimes, by people of all genders, in terms of pleasure and contestation, as disruption of and intervention into the oppressive system of conventional constructs and gender norms, which may simply bring relief.

I regard the trends I outline above as the first step towards a broader reorganization of thinking about the impact of patriarchy on men and towards seeking and developing other, non-toxic forms of gender expression, not only on theatre stages but also in arts institutions.

The block 'Masculinity' continues the theme discussed in issue 171 of *Didaskalia. Theatre Journal* in response to the call for papers 'Masculinities: Mapping the Field' proposed by Wiktoria Tabak. (Introduction to the block: https://didaskalia.pl/pl/artykul/meskosci-w-teatrze-mapowanie-pola)

Translated by Mirosław Rusek

Niniejsza publikacja została sfinansowana ze środków Wydziału Polonistyki w ramach Programu Strategicznego Inicjatywa Doskonałości w Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim.

This publication was financed by the Faculty of Polish Studies as part of Strategic Programme Excellence Initiative at Jagiellonian University.

A Polish-language version of the article was originally published in *Didaskalia. Gazeta Teatralna* 2023, no. 173, DOI: 10.34762/f0sp-nr57.

Author

Wiktoria Tabak

Wiktoria Tabak (wiktoria.tabak@doctoral.uj.edu.pl) is a doctoral student in Arts Studies at the Doctoral School in the Humanities of Jagiellonian University, Kraków. She was invited to take part in Top Minds, the mentoring programme of the Polish-American Fulbright Commission and the Top 500 Innovators Association. Wiktoria won the Ewa Guderian-Czaplińska First Prize in the competition for the best master's thesis in the field of theatre, performance and spectacle studies held by the Raszewski Theatre Institute, Warsaw, and an award in the Andrzej Żurowski National Competition for reviews by young theatre critics presented by the Marshal of the Pomeranian Voivodeship. She regularly publishes reviews in *Didaskalia Theatre Journal*, *Dwutygodnik* and *Czas Kultury*. She has also published in *Pamiętnik Teatralny* and *Widok*. Wiktoria was on the Artistic Board of the 28th National Competition for Staging Polish Contemporary Plays and is a programming consultant for the Contact International Theatre Festival held in Toruń. ORCID: 0000-0002-2435-8985.

Footnotes

1. Here and further on, I follow Raewyn Connell's definition of 'hegemonic masculinity' (2005), which she understands as 'the configuration of gender practices which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees the domination of men and the subordination of women.' Connell argues that the most conspicuous bearers of hegemonic masculinity are not always people primarily associated with power. Other such figures include actors and film characters. She asserts that hegemony can only be established where there is a correspondence between the cultural ideal and institutional and collective power. The effective invocation of authority, even more so than direct violence, is the hallmark of hegemony (even if violence often provides the basis or support for authority). Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity embodies a 'currently accepted' strategy, meaning that the changing conditions of patriarchy can at any time influence the dominance of a particular type of masculinity, and new groups can challenge an old order and construct their own hegemony. Hegemony is a historically mobile relationship, its mutability being a key element of Connell's proposed perception of masculinity.
2. I consider masculinity in isolation from the male body, regarding it as a cultural practice, so when I write about 'mad patriarchal masculinity,' I also refer to women. As bell hooks notes, 'As women have gained the right to be patriarchal men in drag, women are engaging in acts of violence similar to those of their male counterparts. This serves to remind us that the will to use violence is really not linked to biology but to a set of expectations about the

nature of power in a dominator culture' (2004, p. 55).
3. In his book, Kimmel refers to an American context, but in my opinion the framework he proposes is an interesting and inspiring conceptualization that can be applied in a Polish context too.
4. I have transcribed Chyra's words from a recording available on YouTube. See 'Andrzej Chyra WKURZYŁ się na scenie! Wstał i zaczął krzyczeć do dziewczyny z widowni,' 31 August 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Tze2aGT_vc [accessed: 17 November 2022].
5. In early scholarly reflection on masculinity, four strategies of defining this concept predominated: essentialist (the core of masculinity is defined by a selected characteristic), positivist (there is a well-established typology of genders, based on which conservative scales of masculinity and femininity are created without taking into account the gender spectrum), normative (which produces a set of social norms attributed to men and used to identify them) and semiotic (defining masculinity through a system of symbolic difference, in which masculinity and femininity are opposed to each other, with masculinity defined as non-femininity) (Connell, 2005).
6. Tomasik points out that a comprehensive history of Polish masculinity is still to be written and must be informed by extensive research (2016).
7. Stanisław Godlewski offers an interesting examination of this piece from a queer perspective in'Dewocjonalia z Jednorożcem. Krystian Lupa i queer' (Devotional Items with the Unicorn: Krystian Lupa and Queer) (2019).
8. Male protagonists in Monika Strzępka's and Paweł Demirski's productions are also partly weak, which the creators frame as the characters' non-conformity with the generally accepted Western or neoliberal model of masculinity, but it seems they do not offer a broader problematization of the emotional sphere.
9. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from the piece are from the script provided to me by the creators (this also applies to the productions I examine further on).

Bibliography

Abril, Paco, 'Men and Caring Masculinities,' *Idees*, 25.11.2021, https://revistaidees.cat/en/men-and-caring-masculinities/ [accessed: 17.11.2022].

Anderson, Eric, *Inclusive Masculinity: The Changing Nature of Masculinities*, Routledge, London 2011.

'Andrzej Chyra WKURZYŁ się na scenie! Wstał i zaczął krzyczeć do dziewczyny z widowni,' 31.08.2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Tze2aGT_vc [accessed: 17.11.2022].

Bourdieu, Pierre, *Męska dominacja*, trans. L. Kopciewicz, Wydawnictwo Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2004.(Bourdieu, Pierre, *Masculine Domination*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2001).

Connell, Raewyn, *Masculinities* (second edition), Polity Press, Cambridge 2005.

Elliott, Karla, 'Caring Masculinities: Theorizing an Emerging Concept,' *Sage Journals*, 2016,

no. 3, pp. 240-259.

Elliott, Karla, 'Bringing in Margin and Centre: "Open" and "Closed" as Concepts for Considering Men and Masculinities, *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 2022, no. 12, pp. 1723-1744.

Godlewski, Stanisław, 'Dewocjonalia z Jednorożcem. Krystian Lupa i queer,' *Polish Theatre Journal*, 2019, no. 1-2, https://www.polishtheatrejournal.com/index.php/ptj/article/download/189/890 [accessed: 17.11.2022].

Halberstam, Judith (Jack), *The Queer Art of Failure*, Duke University Press, Durham and London 2011.

Hanlon, Niall, *Masculinities, Care and Equality: Identity and Nurture in Men's Lives*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2012.

hooks, bell, *Teoria feministyczna. Od marginesu do centrum* [*Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*], trans. E. Majewska, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, Warszawa 2013.

hooks, bell, *The Will to Change – Men, Masculinity, and Love*, Atria Books, New York London Toronto and Sydney 2004.

hooks, bell, 'Zrozumieć patriarchat [Understanding Patriarchy],' trans. K. Płecha, *Codziennik Feministyczny*

15.06.2013, http://codziennikfeministyczny.pl/zrozumiec-patriarchat/ [accessed: 17.11.2022].

hooks, bell, *Gotowi na zmianę. O mężczyznach, męskości i miłości* [*The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*], trans. M. Kunz, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, Warszawa 2022.

Inna Scena: Koniec męskości? Konstrukcje męskiej tożsamości w polskim dramacie i teatrze, ed. A. Adamiecka-Sitek, D. Buchwald, Wydawnictwo Instytutu Teatralnego im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego, Warszawa 2011.

Kimmel, Michael, *The Politics of Manhood: Profeminist Men Respond to the Mythopoetic Men's Movement (And the Mythopoetic Leaders Answer)*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia 1995.

Kimmel, Michael, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*, Nation Books, New York 2013.

Taraud, Christelle, 'Męskość w warunkach kolonialnych, od końca XVIII wieku do Wielkiej Wojny [Virility In The Colonial Context: From The Late Eighteenth To The Twentieth Century],' [in:] *Historia męskości. Tom drugi* [*A History of Virility*], ed. A. Corbin, trans. T. Stróżyński, słowo/obraz terytoria, Gdańsk 2020, pp. 293-309.

Tomasik, Tomasz, 'Uwagi do wciąż nienapisanej historii męskości w Polsce,' *Pamiętnik*

Literacki, 2016 no. 2, pp. 5-17.

Wilson, Jason, *Cry Like a Man. Fighting for Freedom from Emotional Incarceration*, David C. Cook, Colorado 2019.

Source URL: *https://didaskalia.pl/article/reconfigurations-masculinity-recent-polish-theatre*