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Life Trajectories and Constellations of Eleonora Kalkowska (1883–1937)*

On Monday 15th of April 1929, the “Great scandal in Volksbühne” made the first page of “Welt am Montag” (Trapp: 364) and other newspapers in Berlin (Trapp: 336–353). A play entitled *Joseph*, which was styled as a report, had its premiere in Berlin the night before.¹ The play told the story of the famous case of Jakubowski, a Polish worker from Lubeka and a former POW, who was wrongfully executed and whose case had just shocked the public of the Weimar Republic.² It was not, however, the play itself that caused the uproar (both the text and its staging were met with enthusiasm), but the German-speaking

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¹ The play had been previously staged in Dortmund (Stürzer: 378).

² The story of the wrongly executed Józef Jakubowski, and the campaign for an appeal supported by the League of Nations, including Albert Einstein, Stefan Zweig and Heinrich Mann, were discussed at length in several volumes: e.g. – Olden, Bornstein, Mostar. Likewise, Eleonora Kalkowska’s *Josef* was also discussed – see e.g. Trapp: 73–128; Drewniak: 372–376; Henik Spalińska: 3–18.

author with a Polish surname, Eleonora Kalkowska. According to newspaper reports, “The enthusiastic applause and long ovation, with which the demanding audience of Berlin greeted the staging, were interrupted by the author, who appeared on stage and strongly opposed to the cuts made by the management” (Kramszyk: 2). According to the anecdote, the author stormed the stage and demanded that the play, which was watered down and censored without her consent, be performed with its original ending, which involved a beheading and a guard who cried “You killed an innocent man!”. The ending was clearly a critique of the flawed and xenophobic sentence of the court. When some of the spectators joined Kalkowska, it was decided that the play would continue. However, the leading actor, Ernst Karchow, fainted and “Commotion broke down (...). The audience left the theatre in an atmosphere of scandal, discussing the rights of authors and directors” (Kramszyk: 2). The event reverberated not only in the German press. On the same day, the Polish Consul General Stanisław Zieliński described the “premiere of the drama play entitled *Józef* (...) by a Polish citizen Eleonora Kalkowska-Szarota”³ in a brief which he sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland. This is how the German-speaking author with a Polish surname debuted as a playwright – at the centre of a scandal that was widely discussed in both Berlin and Warsaw.

By that time the name of the 46-year-old writer was still not recognized in Warsaw, even though her literary debut was published in Polish in 1904. In Berlin she was already known in the theatrical and literary circles; at first as an actress from Max Reinhardt’s school, and then as a poet, who in 1916 published a famous anti-war manifesto, *Der Rauch des Opfers*. However, the pivotal point in Kalkowska’s literary career came in 1929 with the premiere of *Josef*. The play affected the reception of her other works and made her recognized as a playwright from Berlin associated with the Zeittheater movement (this image was later reinforced by the staging of *Zeitungsnotizen* in 1932, which, after Hitler’s rise to power, became the main reason for Kalkowska’s arrest and for her subsequent deportation from Germany, where she never returned; she

³ Stanisław Zieliński’s letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 15.04.1929; original in “Teilnachlaß Eleonore Kalkowska” (sign. BF000131281) in Deutsches Literatur Archiv in Marbach, subsequently cited in the text as DLA.

spent the last years of her life in exile in Paris and London⁴). This was how the writer was remembered (although this might be an overstatement, considering Kalkowska's absence in most historical and literary narratives). However, I would like to present the writer's character outside of the context of *Josef*, without limiting the discussion to either Berlin or to the *Zeittheater* movement. Instead, I will try to place the author's life (which is singular and unique, and at the same time can be an example of exile modernism⁵) in broader context. In order to present Kalkowska's case from this perspective, instead of analyzing specific works I will outline the trajectories of the writer's life and the constellations that her character can fit, while focusing on two of the most important periods in her work – the Weimar Republic period and her exile between 1933 and 1937.

Early migrations

Kalkowska was born in 1883 in Warsaw to a Polish-German family. She was the daughter of Emil Kalkowski, an architect, and Maria, born in the noble and rich family of Spitzbarth, who came to Warsaw in the mid-19th century and underwent partial polonization. She spent her early childhood in Warsaw, but she was sent to a German school in Breslau in 1895.⁶ Two years later, Kalkowska's family moved to Saint Petersburg, which might have been connected with her brother, Roman, who was supposedly gifted with perfect pitch and in whose development the family invested.⁷ In the capital of Imperial Russia she studied at *Annenschule*, the biggest and most prestigious German gymnasium, from which she graduated in 1899. After a short visit to Warsaw,

⁴ Kalkowska died in 1937 in Bern.

⁵ See for example: Bahr.

⁶ After the father's early death, the girl will be raised mainly by her German-speaking grandmother, family name Stegeman (*Stürzer*: 63).

⁷ Later Roman Kalkowski – after studying vocal arts in Milan and graduating from the Leipzig Conservatory of Music – he became an actor, and in 1912 he was appointed the director of a theatre in Grudziądz, while in 1919 he became the last German director of The City Theatre in Toruń; in the 1920s Kalkowski emigrated to Pernambuco, Brasil (*Duda*: 75–77).

and her unsuccessful application for philosophy studies in Berlin,⁸ Kalkowska went to France, where she started studying at the Sorbonne's department of the natural sciences. During her student days, Kalkowska associated mainly with Polish and Russian socialists and revolutionaries, particularly with "colonies" of Polish students involved with the "Spójnia" association grouped around Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz.⁹ It was there that she met Marcei Szarota, also from Warsaw, a student of history at Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques and a Polish Socialist Party activist,¹⁰ who she married in 1903.¹¹ Shortly after, Kalkowska published her debut short story collection written under the pen name Ire ad Sol., *Głód życia [The Hunger of Life]*.¹² The collection, written in the spirit of the Nietzschean philosophy of life,¹³ received several reviews – among others by Stanisław Brzozowski, published in the progressive *Głos*, and by Cecylia Walewska, which appeared in the widely read *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (Walewska: 479).¹⁴ However, the work went unnoticed. At that point, the writer decided to start writing only in German, which she later justified by artistic accuracy and a greater ease of expression (R.Z.: 209). After her debut, Kalkowska temporarily moved with her family to Munich, then to Cracow, and finally settled down in Lower Silesia (first in Breslau and then in Goerlitz). Around 1908 Kalkowska joined Max Reinhardt's acting school and travelled regularly between Berlin and Breslau, where she would soon join the Breslauer Schauspielhaus troupe. As a novice actress, she also performed at literary evenings (among other places in Berlin and Cracow), where she recited her translations of Polish and Russian poetry, as well as her own lyric poetry, some of which appeared in *Die Oktave*,

⁸ Women were not accepted because the rector at the time, Adolf von Harnack, objected to the idea.

⁹ For more about Kelles-Krauz see. Snyder, 1998. Kelles-Krauz mentioned meeting Kalkowska in a letter to his wife (Kelles-Krauz: 648).

¹⁰ Who escaped from Poland and therefore avoided exile to Russia, see. Red.: 109–112.

¹¹ In 1904 their daughter, Elida Maria Szarota, in future a great germanist and romanist, was born (Red.: 108–109) their son, Ralph, was born in 1906.

¹² First edition was published in Warsaw in 1904. Recently I have published a critical edition of collection (see: Kalkowska, 2016).

¹³ More on the matter: Dżabagina.

¹⁴ By the end of the 19th Century *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* was published in 11 thousand copies (Gajkowska: 963).

an enthusiastically received volume published by Egon Fleischel's publishing house in Berlin (Kalkowska, 1912). It was, however, the second volume of poetry that brought Kalkowska recognition. Published in 1916 in two thousand copies, *Der Rauch des Opfers*¹⁵ was praised by critics as “the most outstanding piece of poetry written by a woman in decades” (Szarota, 2009: 60–61); literary historians dubbed Kalkowska one of the most significant German poets of the Great War period.¹⁶ The lyric poetry written by her during the war¹⁷ was a pacifist manifesto created in the name of women. The success of the volume and its feminist implications were noticed in Poland, and in 1917 Helena Filochowska published an enthusiastic review of the volume in *Na Posterunku!* (Filochowska: 3–5), a community women's weekly magazine edited by Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska. This fact it is important to note, because although Kalkowska collaborated with Polish emigrant circles in Berlin,¹⁸ in Poland her name was not widely known. The success of the publication in Germany was one of the reasons why Kalkowska abandoned her acting career and devoted herself to literature.

Berlin

After the end of World War I, Kalkowska settled in Berlin. It was around this time, soon after abandoning her acting career, that Kalkowska started to write plays, although until the famous premiere of *Josef*, which was staged ten years later, she was still known as the author of *Der Rauch des Opfers*. In 1917 she published one act of her debut symbolic play *Lelia* in *Die Zeitgeist*, a supplement

¹⁵ Kalkowska, 1916. Fragments translated into to Polish by Nina Oborska appeared in anthology *Wspólnota pytań* (2016).

¹⁶ In her article Joanna Ławnikowska-Koper cites: Bab, Binder. Quoted after – Ławnikowska-Koper: 146.

¹⁷ Kalkowska joined at the time the Cracow organization *Samarytanin Polski*, where she was a nurse for Polish legionaries. More specific details on her life during the war are unknown.

¹⁸ Mainly the group connected with Wilhelm Feldman, who Kalkowska met during her short stay in Cracow, and who from 1915 published in Berlin the *Polnische Blätter* a journal issued three times a month, supporting Polish independence movements (Feldman: 4). Later she worked with the Deutsch-Polnische Gesellschaft established by Feldman in 1918, and published fragments of her German translation of Słowacki's *Kordian* in *Polnische Blätter*.

to *Berliner Tageblatt* (Stürzer: 42). The play was presented on 17 of April at an author's evening in Berliner Seccession.¹⁹ In the 1920s she wrote two other plays based on biblical themes, *Am Anfang* and *Der Schuldige*,²⁰ and historical plays, such as *Katharina* and later *März*, which was published in 1928 by the Heitz publishing house.²¹ The first person who admired and promoted Kalkowska's dramatic works, even before they reached a wider audience, was Karin Michaelis. Kalkowska met the author of the famous *Dangerous Age* in April 1926²² and gave her three of her manuscripts to read: *Am Anfang*, *Die Unvollendete* and *Katharina*. This resulted in *Ein Schloss und eine Dichterin*, an article devoted to the little known playwright, which appeared at the same time in both *Neue Freie Presse* and *Berliner Tageblatt* (Trapp: 44). Michaelis described the author of *Josef* as a discovery – and not only her discovery:

In ein und derselben Woche empfang ich (auch ein sonderbarer Zufall) zwei Briefe hervorragender Frauen, die eine lebt in Amerika, die anders in Frankreich, beide gleichahnungslos von der Existenz der anderen. Beide richteten ungefähr dieselbe Frage an mich (...) Kennen Sie Eleonore Kalkowska? Wenn nicht, dann verschaffen Sie sich ihre Dramen. Sie ist, obgleich unbekannt, einer der größten Dramatiker der Gegenwart.

After this introduction, Micheales praised her younger colleague, emphasizing her linguistic mastery, creative brilliance and the ability to build a certain atmosphere. Her comment on the moving *Die Unvollendete* reads as follows:

Es war leiser als das leiseste Spiel, es war etwas so Stilles wie der Atenzug eines schlafendes Kindes, ein herzbewegendes, schmerzliches Stück russischen Seelenlebens. Der russische Volkscharakter mit seinem *ohne Anfang ohne Ende* unmotiviert und selbstverständlich, undramatisch und spannend. Russisch. So wie es nur Slawen schreiben können" (Trapp: 305).

¹⁹ Invitation to the author's evening available in DLA.

²⁰ Typescripts in DLA.

²¹ Kalkowska, 1928. About the play see, e.g. Jung-Hofmann: 123–145.

²² She mentioned her visit in a letter to Michaelis from 24.08.1926. The letters are kept in the "Karin Michaelis Collection" (sign. NKS 2731 folio, box no. 17) in Det Kongelige Bibliotek in Copenhagen (KMC). I would like to thank Thomas Hvid Kromann for help with accessing the correspondence.

It is one of the rare mentions of the *Die Unvollendete* that refer to its content – the text is lost, so it is impossible to determine the date of its creation or to reconstruct its contents. Nevertheless, Michaelis was so impressed with the play that she arranged a meeting with Max Reinhardt, then the director of the Viennese Theater in der Josefstadt, in order to involve him in the staging of Kalkowska's work. As Stürzer recounts, the renowned director wanted to stage the play, but it was never performed because the leading actress, Helene Thimig, refused to play an older woman²³ (Stürzer: 68). The second play which Michaelis praised (she admitted to reading the manuscript twice) and could almost envision performed on Reinhardt's rotary stage was *Katharina*, a dramatic portrait of Catherine II in the setting of the revolution that enabled her accession to the throne.²⁴ Michaelis concluded her article with another appeal to Reinhardt, in which she set him the task of staging Kalkowska's plays (Trapp: 310). It is possible that Kalkowska met the author of *The Dangerous Age* through her friend Emma Goldman²⁵ (the famous anarchist, residing at the time in France (*Emma Goldman*...: 93), was most probably one of the correspondents of the author mentioned in Michaelis's article). It is not, however, the only possible explanation. In the 1920s Kalkowska was associated with women writer's and artist's organizations such as Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen, where she met Gabriele Münter, an acclaimed German expressionist painter, who contacted the organization and the author in 1926 (*Concise*...: 498; in the 20s she will draw a sketch "Eleonora Kalkowska liest", published in the 50s in the *Menschenbilder in Zeichnungen* – see Münter). In those circles Kalkowska might have also met Rachela Szalit-Marcus, born to a Polish Jew working-class family from Kowno, who was involved with the Berliner Sezession group (Vollmer: 400).²⁶ Milly Steger, Kalkowska's life partner at the time, was also associated with the group (Trapp: 22). She was a successful modernist sculptor, who joined Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen in 1927, and since that time was

²³ It was later performed in 1929 by a rural troupe Schneidenmühlen Landestheater (Stürzer: 378).

²⁴ Working title *Der Mord von Ropscha*. Typescript in DLA.

²⁵ Information on the relationship Trapp bases on Jan Zieliński's findings (Trapp: 23).

²⁶ In 1933 they were both in exile in Paris. After Kalkowska's departure they kept in contact. During WWII Szalit-Marcus was deported from France and is died in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

a member of its presidium for five years (Schulte: 13). Afterwards, Kalkowska was a member of GEDOK (Gemeinschaft Deutscher und Oesterreichischer Künstlerinnen und Kunstfreundinnen), an organization established in 1926 in Hamburg by Ida Dehmel.²⁷

Kalkowska's literary career gained momentum three years after Michaelis's article. After the staging of *Josef*, she started to be recognized outside of Germany, after her play was performed in Dortmund, Berlin and Leipzig (Stürzer: 378). *Josef* was also staged in Poland; the first performance took place at the opening of the working-class theatre "Ateneum" in Warsaw run by Maria Strońska (Hernik Spalińska: 5), and later also in Lwów and Toruń, which gave the Polish press the opportunity to present the figure of the Polish playwright that was already successful in Germany (Dżabagina, 2017: 434). At the same time, the Weimar Republic saw a more dynamic development of Kalkowska's work. She wrote many new plays in this period (e.g. the 1930 *Minus x Minus = Plus!*,²⁸ a political satire, or the 1931 *Sein oder Nichtsein*, nominated for the prestigious Kleist Prize). The author did not, however, limit her work to theatre. In the early 1930s she started working with the *8-Uhr-Abendblatt* journal, for which she wrote articles connected with the theatre (e.g. *Das Theater von morgen*, which discussed the influence of the economic crisis on the theatre²⁹), protest-songs (Trapp: 296) and poetry. Moreover, she published her poems in other journals. A significant example would be *Paragraph 218*, a poem published in *Berliner Volks-Zeitung* in 1931, which expressed the writer's voice in the fight for women's rights (Trapp: 462). The said paragraph banned abortion without exception, and introduced a punishment of 5 years in prison for undergoing the procedure, and of 10 years for performing it (Schroeder-Krassnow: 33). The Draconian law had the most devastating effect on working class women, and was the cause of many suicides and deaths from illegal, and therefore unsupervised and often dangerous, abortions, which were reported every day by the socially engaged left-wing press. In the late 1920s, the campaign to abolish the paragraph was supported by the most notable artists, such as Käthe Kollwitz (whose famous poster, "Down with the Abortion Paragraph", was created in

²⁷ *Ich schreibe...* 10. Kalkowska's member card available in APS.

²⁸ See: Kalkowska, 2008.

²⁹ An interpretation of the article published also in *Gazeta Lwowska* (J.: 3).

1924 in cooperation with KPD – Grossman: 120) and writers, e.g. Friedrich Wolf, the author of *Cyankali*, which was performed around the world (Leyko; Schroeder-Krassnow) and spontaneously recited in 1931 during protests, which increased due to the economic depression and the deep economic crisis (Grossman: 129). Kalkowska makes a reference to the crisis once again in 1932, in a play which, on the one hand, became her greatest theatrical success, and on the other, determined her future.³⁰ *Zeitungsnotizen*, also stylized as a reportage, was based on a press coverage of the suicide wave which hit Germany in connection to the growing unemployment and deepening poverty. The situation was mentioned by Heinrich Mann, who wrote in his enthusiastic review of the play (published in *Berliner Tageblatt*) that in Berlin alone two hundred people committed suicide in one month (Trapp: 432–433). The premiere took place on 4th December at Schillertheater in Berlin (Stürzer: 379), however it had to be cancelled after several performances, because of manifestations organized by Nazi hit squads outside the theatre. On 30 January 1933, after Hitler's rise to power, Kalkowska was arrested for the first time; when she was released, she abandoned her apartment on Sybelstrasse 24 and went into hiding with the help of Milly Steger. When Hitler won the Reichstag election in March, Kalkowska was arrested again, and this time she was only released due to her Polish citizenship after the intervention of Alfred Wysocki, a Polish MP residing in Berlin. However, it is probable that the author's performance, planned for 17th March, where she was going to recite fragments from her pacifist work *Der Rauch des Opfers*,³¹ never took place. Kalkowska was deported from Germany, where she never returned.

Exile

After being deported, Kalkowska did not return to Poland, but went to France, one of the most common destinations of the first wave of refugees from Nazi Germany (e.g. Ritchie: 8). One of her first contacts in exile was Eugenia Sokolnicka, a Polish pioneer of psychoanalysis living in Paris, who popularized

³⁰ More on the play and its reception – Trapp: 258–259; Stürzer: 74–81.

³¹ The invitation available in DLA.

Freud's theories in France (Magnone, 2013: 289).³² The author met her during her student days. At the time when Kalkowska started studying at the Sorbonne, Eugenia Kutner was already a student of natural sciences (and while the author never graduated, Sokolnicka received her degree in 1902 – Magnone, 2016: 8–9). She was also the fiancée of Michał Sokolnicki, a close friend of Eleonora's future husband, Marcełi Szarota. The two women associated with the left-wing social circle of the Student Association "Spójnia" mentioned above. Regardless of the fate of the two marriages (both relationships failed), the friendship between the women lasted for years, although by the early 1930s they did not keep in regular contact; in a letter from 13th April 1933, Sokolnicka apologized for not replying to the writer's letter from the year before. Sokolnicka expressed concern for her friend: "Lately (...) there has not been a day when I would not think about how you are doing. This week I met a lot of newcomers and I asked them about you".³³ She was also glad that Kalkowska would come to Paris, and she invited her to stay with her. The remaining documents suggest that, for at least several months, the writer's address was 30 rue Chevert "chez Madame Sokolnicka".³⁴

The correspondence suggests that Kalkowska did not only ask the analyst for shelter, but also for help in getting acquainted with Paris's cultural milieu. In a letter to the author's daughter, Elida Maria Szarota, Sokolnicka wrote that she was worried that her help might have been insufficient, because she was going through a crisis at the time and was socially withdrawn. Another thing that prevented Kalkowska from gaining recognition in Paris was the language in which she wrote her plays: "It would have been easier if Mother wrote in Polish, because nowadays many people want to promote Polish literature and art, for example Nałkowska's works will be performed soon; it will be much more difficult to arrange a staging of a play written in German".³⁵

Without a doubt, the writer was aware of the difficulties; when she left Germany, she also decided to leave behind the German language, which was later seen as a political gesture. At around this time she wrote *Pariser Filmschilder*,

³² More about it – Magnone, 2016: 7–70. See also – Groth: 59–86.

³³ Letter of Eugenia Sokolnicka to Eleonora Kalkowska from 13.04.1933, APS.

³⁴ Postcard to Eleonora Kalkowska (date and signature unreadable), APS

³⁵ Eugenia Sokolnicka's letter to Elida Maria Szarota from 13.04.1933, APS.

a photo essay published in 1933 in the supplement to *Berliner Tageblatt*. The article was probably Kalkowska's last text written in German, although it was signed only with the initials, and its author could only be determined through archive materials.³⁶ She wrote her last play, *L'Arc de Triomphe*,³⁷ in French. It was probably around that time that Kalkowska started working on a play in Polish. The result of this attempt was a draft, which told the story of a Polish immigrant living in the USA, who upon the outbreak of World War I is torn between family duty, which commands him to stay at home, and patriotic duty, which compels him to return to Europe and fight for Polish independence in Piłsudski's legions.³⁸ According to Anne Stürzer, the play was commissioned by the Polish government; however, the author does not cite the source of this information, and therefore the authenticity of this statement could not be confirmed based on available sources (Stürzer: 142).³⁹ The play was never finished, but it is important to note that only the first part of the draft was written in Polish, while the dialogues were written in French.

After her arrival in Paris, Kalkowska focused on the staging of her plays. In a letter from late October 1933, the actor Werner Kepich expressed his hope that he would soon see one of her plays in Paris, and asked (at the same time suggesting that it would be an obvious choice) whether the play would be *Sein oder Nichtsein*.⁴⁰ The choice would indeed be appropriate, because *Sein oder Nichtsein* was set in Paris, and the play, which secured Kalkowska a nomination for the prestigious Kleist Prize, was one of her best dramas. More importantly, the French audience would most probably be interested in the play, because it tells story of attorney Lefort, who defended Arlette Toison, an assassin who shot the editor of Action Française; the script was based on the notorious Germaine Berton case from the 1920s. In 1923, the 20-year old anarchist killed Marius Plateu, the general secretary of Action Française. Berton was cleared of

³⁶ Letter from Berliner Tageblatt to Eleonory Kalkowskiej from 05.10.1933, APS.

³⁷ The specific date of the text's creation was never determined. Typescript in Eleonore Kalkowska Archiv in Akademie der Künste in Berlin. English translation by Betty Morgan is available in "Teilnachlaß Eleonore Kalkowska" in DLA.

³⁸ E. Kalkowska, *Prolog*, DLA.

³⁹ The information provided by Stürzer is repeated by Trapp: 50, and two biographical notes on Kalkowska-Budke, Schulze: 207; *An Encyclopedia*...: 96.

⁴⁰ Werner Kepich's to Eleonora Kalkowska from 20.10.1933, APS.

all charges after a year-long trial, and for some time became a symbol of the anarchist movement and of French surrealism (e.g. Sonn, 2010: 27–53; Bate: 46–53). The Berton case was famous not only in France⁴¹ and it could have still aroused public interest in the 1930s. Although the play was never translated into French, Alzir Hella, the translator of Rilke's and Heinrich Mann's works, translated *Zeitungsnotizen* (Szarota, 1995: 214).⁴² It is possible that Kalkowska herself decided that *Zeitungsnotizen*, successful near the end of the Weimar Republic, would be more appropriate than a play which failed to be staged in both Berlin and Warsaw.⁴³ In 1933 Kalkowska contacted Natalia Rosenel Lunatscharska, a Russian actor and translator residing at the time in Paris, who translated one act of *Zeitungsnotizen* into Russian.⁴⁴ None of the translations reached a wider audience.

Weimar on the Thames

Kalkowska stayed in France for some time (she lived in Paris and in Boulogne sur Seine). However, she soon moved to London. Most of her biographies say that she left Paris in 1936 (Trapp: 51), but the remaining source materials suggest that she left long before that. Most probably, the writer found it difficult to find her place in the city of her youth. According Elida Maria Szarota, she left it with the sense of disappointment “with the people and the art” (Szarota, 1995: 214). The attempts at staging her plays failed (although in 1934 she was still negotiating with Gaston Baty, the director of Théâtre Montparnasse) and

⁴¹ In Germany the case was publicized by Yvan Goll, who reported on the trial (Goll, 1924), and who in 1925 wrote a book *Germaine Berton. Die Rote Jungfrau*. About Goll's book – Sonn, 2009.

⁴² Typescript *Faits-Divers* translated by Hella in DLA.

⁴³ In early 1930s Kalkowska tried to persuade Jaracz, the director of Warsaw Teatr Ateneum at the time, to stage *Sein oder Nichtsein*. More on this subject: Dżabagina.

⁴⁴ They may have met through the translator husband, Anatola Lunatscharskiiego, a publicist and art critic, the first Soviet commissioner of education and culture, with whom Kalkowska was friends during her Berlin years. See A. Trapp: 22. Eleonora Kalkowska's letter to Natalia Lunatscharskaj-Rozenel from 29.08.1933, available in: Российский Государственный Архив Литературы и Искусства (RGALI) under signature ф. 2648 оп. 1 ед. хр. 151. Typescript of the translation in the Lunatscharska archive under the same number.

she did not publish any new works.⁴⁵ Also, on 19th May Eugenia Sokolnicka committed suicide (Magnone, 2016: 52), which must have been a great shock to Kalkowska. It is highly probable that the writer was planning her departure for London in June 1934;⁴⁶ she arrived there month later and lived at 78 Crystal Palace Park Road.⁴⁷

Refugees from Nazi Germany did not form as strong a community in London as in the USA; for many of them it was just a stop on the road, e.g., to Los Angeles, which Ehrhard Bahr dubbed the “Weimar on the Pacific” (Bahr: 2). Although the United Kingdom was not the refugees’ first choice (particularly in the first years after Hitler’s rise to power – in 1934 the statistics indicate only around 1,600 refugees from Nazi Germany, while in 1939 the number rises to 27,000 – Ritchie: 8; Reiter, 2011: xii), and despite the fact that the most important organizations and associations of intellectuals and artists from the Third Reich (like Freie Deutsche Kulturbund) were established only after 1938 (Reiter, 2008: xii), in the short period before the outbreak of the World War II many renowned figures of the Weimar literary and theatrical circles stayed in London. One of them, Rudolf Olden, was a former writer for *Berliner Tageblatt* and *Die Weltbühne* and from 1934 the secretary of the newly established German PEN-Club (Brinson, Malet: 118), which Artur Holitscher tried to put in contact with Kalkowska.⁴⁸ It is possible that Kalkowska might have known Olden (also a former Human Rights League activist who took a stance in the Jakobowski’s case – see: Olden, Bornsetin) from the years she spent in Berlin. Stefan Zweig, Alfred Kerr and Ernst Toller were also present in London the time, and so were other artists connected with Deutsches Theater zu Berlin: Max Reinhardt, the actors, and the theatre’s former director, Robert Klein (Ritchie: 47).

⁴⁵ Although several journalistic writings of the author were created at the time like, e.g. *Le shake-hand Polono-Allemand* from April 1934, which was her reaction to the peace treaty between Poland and Germany from 26.01.1934. Typescript in DLA.

⁴⁶ 22nd July 1934 she received a letter from A.M. Heath&Company (London), which was searching for a theatre interested in staging *Zeitungsnotizen*. Agent ensures “We have management definitely interested, but have not been able to get them so far to make up their minds sufficiently to sign a contract. There is still, however, considerable hope” (APS).

⁴⁷ Rachel Szalit-Marcus’s letter to Eleonora Kalkowska from 14.07.1934 (APS)

⁴⁸ Artur Holitscher’s letter to Eleonora Kalkowska from 28.07.1934.

Kalkowska's time in London is one of the least documented periods of her life, and it is therefore difficult to say how close she was to other refugees from Germany. However, it is apparent that she often crossed paths with artists from the Weimar Republic. One of the places where she may have met them was the BBC; in 1934 Kalkowska contacted Val Gielgud, the BBC Head of Production at the time, and one of the pioneers of radio drama (which was not a standard theatrical text adapted for the radio, but a new separate genre – Golfarb: 399) and proposed to create a “biophony” (the original term used by the author, which refers to a play based on a biography) of Benjamin Disraeli, the first British prime minister of Jewish descent⁴⁹ (Blake: 486–487). Also, in 1935 the BBC aired *In Small Print*, an English translation of *Zeitungsnotizen*⁵⁰ (Trapp: 29). With time, the broadcasting company became an important center for German-speaking refugees. In 1938, the German Service to the BBC was established, uniting “the best brains among the German and Austrian writers and intellectuals, actors, actresses and producers available in Britain at that time” (Ritchie: 18).⁵¹ The broadcasts were in German, and were meant for listeners from the Third Reich, as an alternative to Goebbels's radio propaganda. In 1942, five years after Kalkowska's death, the Service most probably aired fragments of *Der Rauch des Opfers*, which enabled the author to “play a symbolic role in the fight against Hitlerism” (Morgan: 5). However, it should be noted that in literary history Kalkowska (who resided in London on a Polish passport) is hardly ever mentioned in the context of German exile circles, as if she stopped being treated as a “German writer” at the end of the Weimar Republic.⁵²

⁴⁹ R. Blake, *Disraeli*, London 1967, p. 486–487. Eleonora Kalkowska's letter to Val Gielgud, October 1934, APS.

⁵⁰ In English also as *News in Brief*, trans. Betty Morgan and Ethel Talbot Scheffauer. Typescript of the translation in DLA.

⁵¹ See also the monographic issue of “«Stimme Der Wahrheit»: German-language Broadcasting by the BBC”, *The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies* 5 (2003).

⁵² An interesting example would be Ritchie's paper, where Kalkowska is mentioned in the bibliography, however she appears just in the context of other women dramatists of the Weimar Republic; – the author cites several names after Hans Kafka, who in 1933 published the article *Dramatikerinnen: Frauen erobern die Bühne* in “Die Dame”, where he included the author of *Josef*. Ritchie mentions the Kalkowska in a chapter describing Anna Gmeyer's life in exile, just after the chapter *Women in Exile in Great Britain*, however none of them

Although Kalkowska's relationship with German exile circles can only be supposed, her cooperation with local communities is certain. London gave her more artistic opportunities than Paris (Szarota, 1995: 214). Many of Kalkowska's plays were translated into English: the BBC broadcasted *Zeitungsnotizen*, and both *L'Arc de Triomphe* and *Sein oder Nichtsein* had their English versions (the latter one was translated by Geoffrey Dunlop)⁵³. Most probably, *Die Unvollendete* was also translated. The author established a cooperation with the Spanish Relief Committee (possibly with the help of her friend and translator Betty Morgan, who was the secretary of the organization⁵⁴), an association providing support to the victims of the Spanish Civil War. Before her death, Kalkowska wanted to write a play about Federico Garcia Lorca and about the lives of ordinary people during the conflict. Unfortunately, by June 1937 Kalkowska was in poor health, and had to travel to Bern, Switzerland, where she underwent an operation for chronic thyroid disorder. Due to complications after the surgery, Eleonora Kalkowska's condition got even worse, and she died on the 21st July 1937 (Szarota, 1995: 212). Two years after her death, on the brink of the Second World War, Kalkowska's play *To be or not to be*, directed by Robert Atkins, was staged at the Phoenix Theatre. Ticket sales from the event were donated by Betty Morgan's organization to supporting refugees from Spain, which at the time was torn by the civil war.⁵⁵

Conclusion

In this article, I aimed to bring back the memory of the “scandalist of Volksbühne”, and to prove that her case transcends the Weimar context of the Zeittheater, and even the more broad context of specific national cultures. Previous attempts at fitting the writer's character into national historical and literary frameworks were insufficient, which is evident in the light of the

acknowledges, that at the same time Kalkowska was among the refugees from the Third Reich (Ritchie: 202). Kalkowska's name does not appear also in extensive exile lexicons, such as – Wall, 2004.

⁵³ Two versions of Dunlop's translation of *To Be or Not To Be* stored in DLA.

⁵⁴ According to *To Be or Not To Be* leaflet from 1939, stored in DLA.

⁵⁵ *To Be or Not To Be* leaflet from 1939, stored in DLA.

fact that both the German and the Polish literary narratives do not describe her life and works in a comprehensive way. Kalkowska's unique case requires a transnational approach,⁵⁶ with its own network of references not limited to the German or Polish context; only this will allow Kalkowska's phenomenon to be fully investigated and included in the history of the European culture. The geobiographical map of the places and relationships relevant to her life, which I outlined in this article, is only the first step in interpreting her case from this perspective and in showing her life and works in reference to the centers of modernism.

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⁵⁶ Lately this approach becomes more popular in Polish literary studies, which is evident from Karolina Krasuska's pioneering work (Krasuska), to a recently published monograph *Migracje modernizmu (Migracje modernizmu...*, 2014), or the latest issue of *Teksty Drugie* (“Literatura migracyjna”, *Teksty Drugie* 3 (2016), which does not, of course, exhaust the current literature on the subject.

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Life Trajectories and Constellations of Eleonora Kalkowska (1883–1937)

Summary

The study is devoted to Eleonore Kalkowska (1883–1937), a forgotten Polish-German writer, mostly remembered as a playwright from Berlin associated with the Zeittheater movement, especially as an author of famous play *Josef*, staged at Volksbühne in 1929. In the paper Kalkowska is presented in the broader context – instead of analyzing her works, the author outlines the trajectories of the writer’s life and constellations. At the one hand the author focuses on Kalkowska’s Weimar Republic period (for example writer’s contacts with Karin Michaelis) and the years of her exile from the Third Reich at the other. The later aspect allows to bring up Kalkowska case as an important and forgotten link of the German exile studies.

Keywords: comparative literature, transnational modernism, exile studies, Eleonore Kalkowska

Słowa kluczowe: komparatystyka literacka, modernizm transnarodowy, exile studies, Eleonora Kalkowska