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Papusza – From Traitor to Heroine

Summary. The authors of the article focus the concept of alternative theatre, the Polish alternative theatre experience as a part of universal countercultural movement, the outdoor and site specific theatre festivals as a tool for social change and the future prospects of the alternative theatre in Poland. The term “alternative theatre” assumes the conscious adoption of a critical and rebellious attitude against the existing social and political status quo. What is more, it assumes a desire by artists of the theatre to supplant the existing methods of social communication with other, more creative ways, which better contribute to the self-development of individuals who participate in the process. Here, theatrical performance signifies the wish of theatrical artists to change the structure of their contemporaries’ perception and valorisation of the world.

Keywords: alternative theatre, countercultural movement, site specific Theatre Festivals.

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Introduction

Nearly 30 years after her death, Bronisława Wajs - Papusza¹ appears to have been rediscovered. According to the growing number of researchers and publicists, her biography and literary achievements perfectly fit into the current interest of such academic disciplines as cultural studies, postcolonialism, feminism, and critical discourse analysis. Without a doubt the feature film "Papusza" from 2013, directed by Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze, has played a key role in this "rediscovery" of the gypsy poet. Referring to their work in the online "Dziennik Opini", Agnieszka Graff wrote:

Papusza is ahead of its time, it goes far beyond our contemporary sensibility. It speaks to the sensitivity that has not been formed yet, which perhaps is being born in this moment. What sensitivity? A politically engaged sensitivity, while at the same time inconclusive, prone to ambivalence. Postcolonial? This concept has only just entered the Polish humanities and we still do not know how to apply it. Therefore, I say cautiously that it is about a tendency to think about loss, about reflection on the relations between power and knowledge, about willingness to meet with what is ambiguous.²

This renaissance of interest in Papusza should be seen as a positive phenomenon – given the global trend of the growing distrust of the "other". It is worth considering whether these media and academic discourses about the Gypsy poet are capable of creating a new interpretation of both her biography and poetry.

The theoretical basis for the discussion on this topic was laid by feminist literary criticism. According to Katarzyna Kłosińska, this led to a "reconstruction of various manifestations of the answers to the topic: different types of discourses, different conditions, which moved in time and which often constituted different perspectives of thinking"³. Although – as will be demonstrated in this article – Papusza's poetry has never been perceived through the prism of gender, it seems that to underline this particular element may be a prerequisite for an overall understanding of her work. Without a doubt, her poetry cannot be considered without taking into account the assumptions and understand-

¹ In the Gypsy language "Papusza" means "a doll".

² A. Graff, *Papusza – nie ma prawdy totalnej*, „Dziennik Opinii” 27.11.2013.

³ K. Kłosińska, *Feministyczna krytyka literacka*, Katowice 2012, p. 12.

ing of postcolonialism. Especially in the analysis of press discourse on Papusza, there is a noticeable line drawn between “us” and “someone foreign”, between the civilized world and “the exotic world”, represented by the Gypsy poet. As Leela Gandhi points out a description of humanity excludes the possibility of dialogue with other ways of being human and, in fact, brings into existence and inserts into circulation the term “non-adult” as “non-human”. Needless to say, this step initiates and runs a special, educational and imperialist European hierarchy between adulthood and her childish, colonized Other.

It is true that one cannot directly translate colonial relations into the relations between Poles and Gypsies (Roma), but the fact that Papusza and her poetry have been perceived primarily through the prism of her ethnic origin creates a visible boundary and highlights the divisions of postcolonial prerequisites. This article analyzes both Papusza as a biographical person and as a scientific and media creation, a process that originated in the early 1950’s.

Papusza’s Phenomenon

The contemporary view of Bronisława Wajs is that she is the most outstanding Gypsy poet. In Gorzów Wielkopolski a monument was erected in her honor, and streets were named after her. In 1962 Papusza was admitted to the Union of Polish Writers. Interestingly, Papusza herself did not know what it meant to be a poet, saying: “I myself am a poet and do not know what this poetism really is, just do not know. I know this is big advertising and small business”⁴. Her words turned out to be prophetic. Her works, inspired by nature, were admired by a number of poets: Jerzy Ficowski – the discoverer of her talent,⁵ Julian Tuwim, Anna Kamieńska and Julian Przyboś. While it was mostly among non-Gypsies that Papusza gained popularity, her own milieu considered her a traitor, a betrayer of Gypsy secrets, especially after the publication of Jerzy Ficowski’s *Polish Gypsies*⁶ in 1953.⁷

This made Papusza severely ill, and caused anxiety that plagued her until her death. As a result of despair, she burned some of her poems, and she even stopped

⁴ L. Bończuk, *Wybitni gorzowscy Cyganie*, in *Gorzów miastem wielu kultur*, eds. B. A. Orłowska, P. J. Krzyżanowski, Gorzów Wielkopolski 2014, p. 183.

⁵ Jerzy Ficowski 1924–2006 – a poet and writer.

⁶ *Cyganie polscy*.

⁷ J. Ficowski, *Cyganie polscy*, Warszawa 1953.

writing. There is another important event in the drama of Papusza's life. Her poetry appeared at the same time as the compulsory settlement of Gypsies in Poland. In other words, her poetry coincided with the drama of the Gypsies, who had to abandon their nomadic life while trying to preserve their identity and tradition. Many years had to pass before Papusza gained recognition among the Gypsies, making the peculiar transition from a stigmatized woman to a heroine. The Gorzów Association of Artists and Friends of the Gypsy Culture is named after her, and is headed by her relative, Edward Dębicki. Her poetry is always recited at the Romane Dyvesa festival, held in Gorzów since 1989.

Papusza's Education in a Gypsy Camp

Papusza's exact date of birth remains unknown. Official documents record two dates: August 17, 1908 and May 30, 1910. Papusza often maintained that she was born in 1909. She spent her childhood, youth, and a large part of her adult life in a Gypsy camp. It was a special camp because it consisted of families with strong musical traditions: the Wajs, the Krzyżanowskis, the Debicas, the Korzeniowskis, the Jaworskis, the Sivakovs and the Zielińscy. They formed an orchestra of harpists. Until the outbreak of World War II, they travelled through the roads and forests of the Podole and Volyn.⁸ At around the age of thirteen Papusza started learning to read and write. This is how she described it:

I asked children who went to school to show me a couple of letters. Then I stole something and I brought it to them to make them teach me. And so I learned my ABC. One Jewish woman lived near us, a shopkeeper. I caught chickens and I gave them to her, and she taught me to read. And then I read a lot of newspapers and various books. I can read well, but I write ugly because I read a lot and wrote little. And it has remained with me until today. I am proud of this education, even though I was not taught at school, but by myself and through all my life.⁹

Papusza's mother sensed disaster coming from her daughter's education and told her that books poison the brain and only bring stupidity.¹⁰ Papusza used to say that her literacy was ridiculed by Gypsies. She therefore became an object of ridi-

⁸ E. Dębicki, *Wczorajszy ogień. Ptak umarłych II*, Gorzów Wielkopolski 2012, p. 59.

⁹ J. Ficowski, *Cyganie na polskich drogach*, Kraków 1986, pp. 253–254.

¹⁰ A. Kuźniak, *Papusza*, Wołowiec 2013, p. 33.

cule in her own milieu. For other members of the camp, it was obvious that “a Gypsy would not be a scholar”. Literacy was unnecessary for Gypsies during their wanderings; they regarded reading and writing as typically non-Gypsy occupations.¹¹

Papusza’s education was interrupted by the war. Members of her camp had to seek refuge first from the Germans, who considered them “a racially undesirable element”, and from 1943, also from the Ukrainian nationalists, who were carrying out genocide against the Polish population.¹² It should be noted that the Papisza camp identified with the Polish people; they even said that the Gypsies were Polish. Those who survived the war joined the displaced persons who moved to the so-called ‘Recovered Territories’. In the autumn of 1946 the Papisza camp crossed the border and entered Poland in the region of Przemyśl. The further route of their journey led through Głubczyce to Wrocław, and further toward Żagań, Zielona Góra, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Pyrzyce, Stargard and Szczecin. Finally, in 1953 Papisza, together with her husband – Dionysius Wajs – settled in Gorzów Wielkopolski.¹³

Stigmatized and Rejected by her People

In 1949 Jerzy Ficowski joined the Papisza camp. He was introduced to the group by Edward Czarnecki, who also helped him find a shelter in the camp. It should be noted that in 1948 the Ministry of Public Security had tried to persuade Ficowski to collaborate with the communist regime, but he refused. Despite this, the secret police did not give him peace and paid him numerous visits.¹⁴ It turned out that sheltering in a Gypsy camp was the best solution. Edward Czarnecki, an old friend of the camp, introduced Ficowski to its members as his nephew.¹⁵ Ficowski remained there for two years. During that time he learned the habits of the Gypsies and discovered Papisza’s talent. He was captivated by her songs and encouraged her to write them down. It is likely that at that time Ficowski did not fully realize how the principle of “romanipen” worked in Gypsy communities.¹⁶ As noted by Adam Bartosz, the re-

¹¹ E. Dębicki, *Wczorajszy ogień. Ptak umarłych II*, Gorzów Wielkopolski 2012, pp. 74–75.

¹² E. Dębicki, *Ptak umarłych*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 118–121.

¹³ P. Krzyżanowski, *Cyganie w Gorzowie Wielkopolskim - wymuszone osiedlenie*, in *Gorzów miastem wielu kultur*, eds. B. A. Orłowska, P. J. Krzyżanowski, Gorzów Wielkopolski 2014, pp. 50–51.

¹⁴ C. Kuta, *Działania aparatu represji wobec Jerzego Ficowskiego*, in *Glaukopis*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 334–335.

¹⁵ J. Ficowski, *Demony cudzego strachu*, Warszawa 1986, p. 46.

¹⁶ J. Pobiedzińska, „Papisza” nie była wyklęta? Jak środowisko Romów polskich ocenia Papiszę dziś? Czy naprawdę zdradziła? Czy naprawdę była wyklęta? *Dialog-Pheniben* 2013, no. 11, p. 31.

nowned ethnographer and Gypsy expert, the “romanipen principle” is the guiding value, the fundamental principle of moral and ethical interpretation of tradition. A Gypsy is expected to adhere to the “romanipen”. In other words, a Gypsy must act so as not to give anyone from his community an opportunity to ask the question: *Na som Rom? - Are you not a Gypsy?*¹⁷ Breaking the rules results in defilement or expulsion from the Gypsy community. The most serious offense against the “romanipen” is giving away Gypsy secrets to strangers, and this is what Papusza was accused of. The Gypsies were angry with her because she told Ficowski the secrets of the Gypsy life, which for centuries had been kept secret. It should be emphasized that the Gypsies were not interested in Papusza’s poetry, which they regarded as a betrayal of their language. Working on Papusza’s poetry, Ficowski prepared and revealed a dictionary of the Romany language.¹⁸ Gypsies recognized this as dangerous for their own community, as it allowed non-Gypsies to enter their social environment. This resulted in Papusza being isolated by her community. In consequence, she became sick, which forced her to make frequent visits to hospitals. Papusza identified the cause of her misfortune in the following words: *If I had not learned to read and write, I’d be a happy fool.*¹⁹ She had to move away from her community and she lost her loved ones.

Appreciated by Non-Gypsies

While Gypsies disregarded Papusza, she gained recognition outside her group, being perceived as the first Gypsy poet. She made her debut in 1951 in the “Nowa Kultura” magazine. Subsequently three volumes of her poetry were issued: “Pieśni Papuszy” (1956), “Pieśni mówione” (1973) and “Lesie, ojczcie mój” (1990). Her poems have been translated into German, English, French, Spanish, Swedish and Italian.²⁰ In “Lesie, ojczcie mój” she included one poem – *Ja, biedna Cyganka (I, a poor Gypsy woman)* – written in 1950. The poem indicates that Papusza wanted to leave a lasting impression, as opposed to other Gypsies who could neither read nor write.²¹ Papusza wanted to leave her poems, even though it cost her a lot of misunderstandings from other Gypsies.

¹⁷ A. Bartosz, *Nie bój się Cygana*, Sejny 1994, p. 129.

¹⁸ L. Bończuk, *Papusza czyli wolność tajemna.*, Gorzów Wielkopolski 1996, p. 21.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 19.

²⁰ D. Fedor, *Bronisława Wajs „Papusza”*, Dialog-Pheniben 2013, no. 11, p. 12.

²¹ Papusza, *Lesie, ojczcie mój*, Warszawa 1990.

*O , wielcy, biedni Cyganie!
I jak tu wam żyć na świecie?
Nic przeczytać czy napisać nie umiecie.
Nie będzie z was kiedyś nikogo,
śmierć pozabiera jednego po drugim.
I nic nie zostanie po was.
A ja piszę, jak potrafię,
choć nieraz płaczę łzami,
i coś pozostawię ludziom,
i świat pozna mnie, i wspomni,
że była sobie Cyganka
nieszczęśliwa i biedna,
co czytać i pisać chciała,
i śpiewać cygańskie piosenki...*

Indeed, Papusza was appreciated mainly by non-Gypsies, as within her own community learning to read and write was deemed not only as an unworthy occupation, but also contrary to the Gypsy tradition. Papusza's poems were inspired by her camp life and nature. It is worth repeating after the writer Zdzisław Morawski that Papusza saw God in all nature.²² In addition to her poems, Papusza also wrote a diary, which still has not been published to this day. In 1953 together with her husband and an adopted son, she settled down in Gorzów Wielkopolski and, as an already established Gypsy poet, she was recognized by the municipal authorities as a "spiritual guide of local Gypsies".²³ The city authorities even boasted that there was a famous poet among the Gypsies settled in the city. Therefore, the Bureau of the City Council in Gorzów awarded her an apartment in a new concrete block. However, as there was nowhere to keep their wagon, Papusza and her family decided to stay in the old German house at 20 Kosynierów Gdyńskich. Next to the building there was enough space for the wagon and a horse. It was there that Papusza was visited by other poets, including Jerzy Ficowski and Edward Stachura.²⁴

²² Z. Morawski, *Wszystko co wiem o Papuszy*, in *Papusza czyli wielka tajemnica*, eds. J. Sikora, Gorzów Wielkopolski 1992, p. 51.

²³ P. Krzyżanowski, *Zatrzymane tabory*, „Biuletyn IPN” 2014, no. 3, p. 39.

²⁴ Z. Morawski, *Wszystko co wiem o Papuszy*, in *Papusza czyli wielka tajemnica*, eds. J. Sikora, Gorzów Wielkopolski 1992, p. 52.

Press Discourses on Papusza

Due to her biography, Papusza was an interesting topic for the Polish press prior to 1989. As a result of the so-called 'Polish thaw' in the second half of 1956, the pages of magazines were opened up to new challenges as the role of the communist propaganda decreased. The paradigm of socialist realism ceased to set the course for the Polish media. This change could be observed in both national literary journals, as well as in local titles, including those published in the Lubuskie region. The press interest in Papusza was a reflection of her popularity among domestic poets and writers. In the second half of the 1950s, such writers as Julian Przyboś and Wisława Szymborska acknowledged Papusza as a great talent. In consequence, articles on Papusza appeared in the press for many years, though – and this is worth emphasizing – their number was limited. Papusza appeared more frequently in regional and local newspapers, not so often in the national press.

The press portrayal of Papusza was inconsistent. The way in which it was presented resulted partly from the evolution of Polish poetry and partly from the changing political situation in the Polish People's Republic. It is perfectly illustrated by the leitmotif of most of the texts devoted to Papusza, namely the question of her belonging. Although no journalist asked directly whether Papusza was a Polish or Gypsy poet, this dilemma can be discerned in most newspaper articles. As "Gazeta Gorzowska" wrote in 1958: *People who have experienced her works, she has introduced them to the exotic world of the wagon people. She has fascinated the imagination with the spell of romance of the Gypsy life. She was for them a Gypsy from a wagon, singing her songs in the evening by the fire spread in a forest glade.*²⁵ Both the description and the application of more or less direct references to the ethnicity of the poet ("the exotic world of the wagon people", "A Gypsy from a wagon") clearly indicates that Papusza was perceived primarily as a representative of an unknown, wild world. It is impossible not to notice that this press discourse on Bronisława Wajs contains elements of post-colonial discourse, where everything "foreign" attracts interest, but at the same time is treated with a certain distance. This is confirmed by Jerzy Ficowski, who wrote about the changing attitude towards the Gypsies in the 1960s:

Apart from some information concerning their customs, which often turned to be false, it consisted – apart from scholarly linguistic works – of the image of Gypsies as seen from the outside through the eyes of the uninitiated and often biased observers, mainly because they perceived only what could effortlessly

²⁵ T. Kajan, *Na 50-lecie Papuszy*, „Gazeta Gorzowska” 1958, no. 194, p. 6.

be observed: borderland conflicts, the interface between the natives and the “nomads”; between the Gypsies and the environment.²⁶

One gets the impression that journalists were interested not so much in Papusza’s poetry, as in her ethnicity. In other words, what defined Bronisława Wajs was not the value of her poetry, but first and foremost the fact that she was a Gypsy poet – strange and exotic. In the “Nadodrże” periodical, Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz admitted that “Papusza’s creativity could exist only as long as she had memories of her previous nomadic life. Along with their disappearing, there ends the source of her poetic inspiration, there ends her creativity”.²⁷ In another of his texts, published in the national “Tygodnik Kulturalny”, Waśkiewicz concluded that Papusza was a poet of only one topic – *nature and the bohemian life*.²⁸ Interestingly, in spite of the changing socio-political situation, “the Gypsy nature” of Papusza’s poetry still dominated in the press discourse. Also in biographical texts Bronisława Wajs was defined through the prism of her ethnicity. On the one hand, it is not surprising, after all, for most of her life Papusza’s world was the world of wagons and travel. On the other, it is difficult not to notice the deprecating tone that accompanied all the press discussion. According to the writer Anna Kamieńska, Papusza “has not ceased to be a Gypsy. Her song has not ceased to be a folk Gypsy song. (...) She was a simple Gypsy woman, except that she has been endowed with greater intelligence and greater curiosity”.²⁹ It is thus no wonder that with the decision to abandon the camp and settle down in Gorzów Wielkopolski, Bronisława Wajs ceased to be of interest to Polish journalists. This change was observed by Halina Ańska, who wrote in 1975 that when

Papusza rode with her camp, she felt then like a queen.³⁰ However, after the break with this life, she lost her talent: Papusza is not even trying to write down her thoughts, because before she writes the first few words, “others scatter into small letters” and letters flee, every one in a different direction. Then she gets a headache and cries for a long time and cannot sleep...³¹

²⁶ J. Ficowski, *Demony cudzego strachu*, Warszawa 1986, p. 11.

²⁷ A. K. Waśkiewicz, *Papusza*, „Nadodrże” 1963, no. 6, p. 7.

²⁸ A. K. Waśkiewicz, *Papusza*, „Tygodnik Kulturalny” 1964, no. 34, p. 5.

²⁹ A. Kamieńska, *Pieśni Papuszy, Pragnąca literatura. Problemy pisarstwa ludowego i nurtu ludowego poezji współczesnej*, eds. A. Kamieńska, Warszawa 1964.

³⁰ H. Ańska, *Papusza*, „Nadodrże” 1975, no. 13, p. 8.

³¹ *Ibidem*, s. 8.

It is surprising how few journalists perceived Papusza first and foremost as a woman. Indeed, as it is demonstrated above, Bronisława Wajs was defined primarily by her ethnicity. It was “the Gypsy roots” that made her and her poetry extraordinary. Still, to understand Papusza, her gender is as important as her ethnicity. The press began to pay attention to Papusza in the second half of the 1950s. This was the time when women were once again expected to stay at home and devote themselves to their families. It is enough to say that among the economic demands of the strikers in Poznań in June 1956 there was one calling for pay rises for men, so that “women would not have to work anymore”. However, while Polish women had an opportunity to decide about their own future – even if limited – the position of a Gypsy woman in her community was non-negotiable. The journalists who wrote about Papusza must have been aware of her “revolutionary” behavior, yet decided against emphasizing that fact. Certain references to her gender occurred sporadically and were kept in the same paternalistic tone as the remarks of “the Gypsies magical world”. Waśkiewicz wrote: “Bronisława Wajs, who uses Papusza as her pseudonym, which means ‘a doll’, is the only Polish Gypsy poet”.

Just as settling down in Gorzów deprived Papusza’s creativity of the aura of “exoticism”, so did it influence the press’ perception of the poet. Sections of articles relating to her further fate repeated the image of Papusza as a clumsy and isolated woman, especially after her husband’s death. It is difficult not to associate the fact of Papusza’s resignation from the nomadic lifestyle with the press’ emphasis on her literary crisis. Equally significant changes had occurred in her personal life. In the aforementioned article, Ańska described Papusza’s lonely life:

What for her smile and kind heart? Papusza did not go to the club when they asked her, now they do not even ask, so she sits at home in the evenings, by her warm stove, lights a cigarette and waits until her songs “come” to her (...) Then she gets a headache and cries for a long time and cannot sleep...

Her gender, which had previously only been highlighted in order to underline the “uniqueness” of Papusza, as reflected by the repetition of such phrases as “the only Gypsy poetess”, was also used to depreciate her achievements.

Analyzing the press discourse on Papusza, it is impossible not to mention its political aspect. In Poland, dominated by the communist paradigm of the press “as a collective agitator”, each newspaper and magazine had propaganda functions. As was already mentioned, the communist authorities sought to eliminate the nomadic lifestyle of Gypsies, forcing them to settle down. It was not a coincidence that the

beginning of the press interest in Bronisława Wajs and her poetry occurred in the second half of the 1950's, during the implementation of the forced settlement of the Gypsy communities in Poland. Journalists openly admitted it. One of them, Czesław Michniak, wrote in 1959 that *the contemporary propaganda machine has made the poetess an object of interest for readers, radio listeners and – as it can soon be expected – viewers. Papusza's apartment at 20 Kosynierów Gdyńskich, has already been visited by the editors of the Polish Radio, "Nadodrze", "Gazeta Zielonogórska", there have even been correspondents of the "Chłopska Droga".* The specificity of the period in which Papusza appeared in national and local magazines was – next to her origin, creativity and gender – an essential element of the discourse on the poet; an element inextricable from the government's policy at the time.³²

The political situation demanded that the media present the story of Papusza abandoning the nomadic lifestyle as a success. Since literary magazines were addressed primarily to the elites, they had to explain and underline the validity of the steps taken by the authorities. It is thus no wonder that in his article Waśkiewicz noticed: "Papusza, who is considered to be a Polish poetess, writes in the Gypsy language. She proved it in oral statements and her poems. The nation, which until now was stateless, is in the process of integration". Having settled down in Gorzów, Papusza received the title "our poet" — though it has to be emphasized that it was only a local title. Anna Kamińska also wrote about the benefits resulting from the change of the lifestyle. In Papusza's, the flourishing of her poetry began with the moment of settlement. Thus, on abandoning the "exotic" and in consequence, abandoning part of her poetry, Papusza the Gypsy poet had transformed into a Polish poet. This transformation was strengthened by the suffering that Bronisława Wajs experienced during World War II – like the entire Polish society. In this manner, Kamińska reminded her readers about Papusza's inseparable ties to Poland, "where she happened to live, wander and suffer the most terrible persecution of fascists".

How did the press discourse change after the death of Papusza? Her obituaries and memories duplicated existing content, and therefore emphasized the "exoticism" in both her origin and poetry. Others emphasized the change which had occurred in her life after she had made the decision to abandon the nomadic lifestyle. In one of the occasional texts, published in the "Życie Literackie", Tadeusz Kajan wrote: "It must be said that Papusza's poetry expresses some kind of suffering – her own and her Gypsy community. Her poems are like an indirect appeal to all people to the change of the fate. (...) The fate, however, cannot be

³² K. Wasilewski, *Prasowe wizerunki Bronisławy Wajs – Papuszy, Cyganie/Romowie w Polsce*, eds. B. Orłowska, P. Krzyżanowski, Gorzów Wielkopolski 2015, pp. 271–282.

changed. The fate can only complete itself. (...) Papusza's poetry played a guiding role, trying to bring the Gypsy community to the new social situation". At the same time it is difficult to regard Papusza as a well-known poet. While the texts printed in the local press depicted her as "our poet", in nation-wide literary magazines, journalists had to explain her life and poetry to their readers. As was mentioned earlier, Papusza frequently appeared in the press in the late 1950s and the 1960s, when the communist government carried out forced settlement of the Gypsies. A short renaissance of media interest in Papusza could be observed after 2010. This was due to Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze's film "Papusza", and the publishing of the book of the same title by Angelika Kuźniak in 2013. Various magazines decided to write about Bronisława Wajs, remembering her biography and work. On the one hand, we can speak of some shift of emphasis – Papusza was finally analyzed through the prism of her gender, largely thanks to the Krauzes' movie. It is no wonder that many reviews alluded to this aspect of Papusza's life. On the other hand, articles paid little attention to her poetry, rarely daring to provide any new explanation. Again, Bronisława Wajs was portrayed mainly as an "exotic" figure.

Papusza – a Poetess of Two Nations

In 1987, when Papusza died, very few people thought that she would become a Gypsy heroine.³³ Many years had to pass, just as Papusza wrote in one of her poems: "After many years, and perhaps soon before your hands find my song. Where does? Is the day or asleep?".³⁴

Contemporary Gypsies boast about Papusza as someone who showed their culture to the outside world. At the same time, they seem to empathize with her drama. They understand Papusza's suffering, as she was the victim of many false accusations. They emphasize that she took a great step forward, regardless of the consequences. The issue of the defilement of Papusza was finally decided by Edward Dębicki. He stated that Papusza had not been defiled, that she had been expelled from the Gypsy community for the betrayal of its secrets. Edward Dębicki who wandered with Papusza in one camp, remembers that the poet was a sensitive person and had an extraordinary imagination.³⁵

³³ Papusza died on 8 February 1987 in Inowrocław where she was buried.

³⁴ *Gilori*, 1952, translation from the Gypsy language by Jerzy Ficowski. A poem included in: L. Bończuk, *Papusza czyli wolność tajemna*, Gorzów Wielkopolski 1996, p. III.

³⁵ M. Szemczyszyn, *Dom to klatka*. An Interview with E. Dębicki "Biuletyn IPN" 2014, no. 3, p. 42.

Gypsies care about the places associated with Papusza. This is particularly evident in Gorzów Wielkopolski. In 2002, members of The Papusza Association of Artists and Friends of the Gypsy Culture unveiled a commemorative plaque on the house at Kosynierów Gdyńskich, where the poetess lived until 1983. In 2007, representatives of Gypsy communities (including the World Romani Congress and Gypsy organizations from Berlin) participated in the unveiling of the monument in the city's main park. It was a place frequented by Papusza. The monument was made by the local sculptor Zofia Bilińska and shows Papusza sitting on a stump, and holding a book in her hands. The effort to restore the memory of Papusza among the Gypsy community has been visible in the last few years. Gypsies who now live in Poland assert that they are Polish Gypsies, and that their culture is part of the Polish culture. This is the view taken by Edward Dębicki, who in 2012 was awarded the Gloria Artist gold medal by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.³⁶ Also other important events inspired by the figure of the poet and her works cannot be ignored,³⁷ such as the oratory by Jan Kanty Pawluskiewicz devoted to Papusza, which has been performed twice in the Blonie Park. Another important event was the inclusion of Papusza in the group of 60 prominent Polish women who influenced the course of history in the exhibition "From the History of Polish Women". The exhibition opened in 2004 at the Theater Museum of the Teatr Wielki – Polish National Opera in Warsaw.³⁸ The ceremony was attended by representatives of the Gorzów branch of the Papusza Association of Artists and Friends of the Gypsy Culture. Also in 2004 the Polish Post issued a postcard with a picture of Papusza and reproduced a fragment of her poem "Forest, my father...". It should also be noted that information on Papusza was included in the renowned PWN Universal Encyclopedia.³⁹

The City Council of Gorzów Wielkopolski announced that the year 2013 would be the Year of Multiculturalism. Among the many events resulting from this decision was the "Week with Papusza". It was a series of performances, lectures and exhibitions dedicated to the poetess. These events made many Gypsies proud of Papusza, as well as of their culture and tradition. She has finally become the hero of her own people. During her life, none of the Gypsies would have thought that the streets in Gorzów Wielkopolski and Inowrocław would be named after Papusza. In

³⁶ P. Krzyżanowski, *Proces mobilizacji etnicznej na przykładzie Międzynarodowych Spotkań Zespołów Cygańskich „Romane Dyvesa”*, in *Mobilizacja i etniczność*, eds. M. Giedroń, M. Kowalewska, M. Mieczkowska, Szczecin 2012, p. 265.

³⁷ D. Barański, *Spacerownik śladami Papuszy*, Gorzów Wielkopolski 2013, p. 3.

³⁸ <www.kobieta.interia.pl>.

³⁹ Nowa Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN, vol. 4., Warszawa 1997, p. 770.

2016, Edward Dębicki began to work on setting up the Papusza Institute in Gorzów Wielkopolski, which will conduct research and popularize her legacy.⁴⁰

Conclusions

Papusza's uniqueness lies in the fact that she is the first Gypsy poet to become a part of the collective memory of both Poles and Gypsies. As noted by Jerzy Ficowski, Papusza's limited ability to write posed a serious obstacle to the proper choice of words and the use of other means of expression. Nevertheless, Papusza wrote poems that are works of art, retaining the features of the folk creativity of Gypsies that can still impress everyone.⁴¹ Her creativity was "appropriated" by the state authorities, who used it to excuse the forced settlement of the Gypsies. The culmination of the settlement campaign took place in 1964, when Polish Gypsies were forbidden to wander with their caravans. The activities of the state authorities were perceived by many Gypsies as dangerous to the maintenance of their ethnic identity. It is not surprising that in these circumstances the Gypsies perceived any contact with people outside the community as a betrayal of their own community, especially when it came to disclosure of the Gypsy language. Such was the case with Papusza. From the contemporary perspective, she is regarded by Gypsies as a heroine. They see in her a poetess who wrote about the drama of their loss of freedom.

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⁴⁰ S. Soczewa, *W willi Jaehnego powstanie Instytut im. Papuszy, poetki cygańskiej, która mieszkała w Gorzowie*, „Nasze Miasto” <www.gorzowwielkopolski.naszemiasto.pl, 28.10.2016>.

⁴¹ J. Ficowski, *Papusza i jej pieśni*, in *Papusza, Lesie ojczyzny*, Warszawa 1990, p. 6–7.

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