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RETURNING THE OTHER

Przywracając Inną

Abstract: The author reviews Nataliya Yakubova's monograph *Irena Solska: The Burden of Unusualness* (Moscow 2019) which is the result of more than ten years of work. Yakubova emphasizes that for her the past remains an "open project" to which one can (and should) return many times and her book can be seen as such "portal to the past". The creative and life path of Irena Solska was chosen as the object of research, and its subject was defined as the "burden of unusualness" of the actress's personality. Yakubova sees the main analytical problem in the conservation of social stereotypes about Irena Solska and diagnoses the fundamental bias, spread in Polish culture, of the myth of Irena Solska as a "demonic woman". Therefore, the purpose of the study was the interpretation of sources, the destruction of stereotypes, and overcoming patterns of representations. The principle of interdisciplinary research allows her to consider the fate of the star actress as a phenomenon of her time, in the dynamics of complex socio-political, socio-cultural, aesthetic-technological and ideological-emancipatory changes from the late nineteenth century to the late 1930s. (*Transl. S. Harbuziuk*)

Keywords: Irena Solska, actress' biography, Polish actress, women in theater history

Abstrakt: Autorka recenzuje monografię Natalii Jakubowej *Irena Solska: Ciężar niezwykłości* (Moskwa 2019) stanowiącą efekt przeszło dziesięcioletnich badań. Jakubowa podkreśla, że przeszłość jest dla niej „otwartym projektem”, do którego można (i trzeba) wracać wielokrotnie. Jej książkę należy traktować jako tego rodzaju „bramę do przeszłości”. Przedmiotem badań stała się twórcza i życiowa droga Solskiej, temat zaś został określony jako „ciężar niezwykłości” osobowości aktorki. Jakubowa podejmuje problem społecznych stereotypów narosłych wokół aktorki, zwłaszcza powszechnego w polskiej kulturze podtrzymywania mitu Solskiej jako „kobiety demonicznej”. Dlatego głównym celem studium jest interpretacja źródeł, kwestionowanie stereotypów i przekraczanie dotychczasowych modeli reprezentacji. Interdyscyplinarne założenia pracy pozwalają ująć losy aktorskiej gwiazdy w kontekście dynamiki złożonych zmian społeczno-politycznych, społeczno-kulturowych, estetyczno-technologicznych i ideologiczno-emancypacyjnych od końca XIX wieku do późnych lat trzydziestych XX wieku. (*Przel. E. Partyga*)

Słowa kluczowe: Irena Solska, biografia aktorki, polska aktorka, kobiety w historii teatru

Наталья Олеговна Якубова, *Ирена Сольская. Время необычности: Монография*, Издательство ГИТИС, Москва 2019

Speaking about the combination of biographical (chronological) and monographic (problematic) scientific approaches in one book, Yuri Lotman once emphasized that this “rarely leads to success”¹. The line from the famous Russian scholar is quoted not only because the book *Irena Solska. The Burden of Unusualness: A Monograph* that will be discussed here was written by the acclaimed Russian theatrologist and critic Nataliya Yakubova for the Russian-speaking reader, but also because this publication proves the productivity of the synthesis of analytic strategies and genres, the importance of mixing different methodological tools in working on complex topics in the history of theater in the late nineteenth and the first third of the twentieth century.

The monograph is the result of more than ten years of work, in particular, Yakubova’s participation in the research group “Literature and Gender” under the auspices of the Polish Academy of Sciences, with the support of the Maria Skłodowska-Curie International Fellowship. A research scholarship in Poland allowed Yakubova to immerse herself deeply not only in historical documents but also in the current Polish theatrical processes. From the very beginning of the book, we meet the names of famous Polish theatrologists and artists (Lidia Kuchtówna, Jan Michalik, Dariusz Kosiński, Krystian Lupa), and at the end of the book, we see acknowledgements to Polish academics: Agnieszka Marszałek, Małgorzata Palka, Diana Poskuta-Włodek, Dorota Jarząbek-Wasył, and a range of institutions involved in the creation of the book. Finally, together with the modern play *The Hideout/Kryjówka* set in the attic of one of the Warsaw houses, among the grey web of woolen threads and private stories of the Second World War returned from oblivion, we meet the main protagonist of the play (and future book), the very Irena Solska. *The Hideout* by Patrycja Dołowy, directed by Paweł Passini, as Yakubova testifies, was unexpectedly in tune with her own intentions and research agenda, based on facts and dates, but even more so on signs and

¹ Lotman, Y. (1985). Biografiya – zhivoye litso. *Novyy mir*, 2, 228–236, p. 228.

meanings: hidden, forgotten, lost. After all, Yakubova emphasizes that for her, for contemporary Polish artists, as well as for Irena Solska, the past remains an “open project” to which one can (and should) return many times (p. 11).² The proposed book is, in fact, one such “portal to the past”.

We learn about all this from the *Introduction*, written – unexpectedly for a research monograph – in subjective, torn, emotional tones. “Splashing” on the readers the “stream of research consciousness” from the first page, Yakubova seems to test their ability to perceive non-academic forms of expression. This non-classical *Introduction* serves as an explication of future research, where the author on the one hand confesses to the reader her excitement “at the start”, on the other – outlines the key parameters of the work. We understand that the creative and life path of Irena Solska was chosen as the object of research, and its subject was defined as the “burden of unusualness” of the actress’s personality. The author sees the main analytical problem in the conservation of social stereotypes about Irena Solska and diagnoses the fundamental bias, spread in Polish culture, of the myth of Irena Solska as a “demonic woman”. Therefore, the purpose of the study is the interpretation of sources, the destruction of stereotypes, and overcoming patterns of representations. For the modern reader, Solska can and should be “justified” and “explained”: the basis for this is a sufficient source base (autobiography of the actress, archives, correspondence, memoirs, works of art and iconography, critical articles), as well as a wide range of methodological approaches – from textology and source studies to psychoanalysis and deconstruction as a tool of feminist criticism.

The first chapter, *Mrs. Acne as a mirror of the art revolution*, is devoted to the deconstruction of the literary image of Irena Solska in the creative work and epistolography of men. Analyzing Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz’s novels *622 Downfalls of Bungo, or The Demonic Woman*, Jerzy Żuławski’s *Return*, Stanisław Eljasz-Radzikowski’s letters and a number of other works, Yakubova step by step questions the exclusively masculine and therefore already biased view of the women/actress with whom each of them had a relationship. Yakubova convincingly proves the egocentrism of the masculine narrative that leads to the objectification of women. She demonstrates the mechanisms of the respective authors’ “removal” or “passing over in silence” of independent creative individuality in the images of heroines based on Solska, and, moreover, the identification of acting activities with prostitution, etc. Overcoming the masculine misrepresentation of Solska’s figure, Yakubova rightly asks: “Is it possible to somehow restore Irena Solska’s own voice?” (p. 47). Thus, the author does not hide her intentions to be the advocate of the heroine. After all, in front of us is a book written by a woman about a woman, and it is truly feminist

² Yakubova, N. O. (2019). *Irena Sol’skaya. Bremya neobychnosti: Monografiya*, Moskva. Throughout the review, page numbers in parentheses refer to this book.

writing in the sense that it seeks to explore the hidden, the silent, the subordinate, the often irrational, and the seemingly inexplicable. It aspires to make the voice of this other Irena Solska heard, the voice we haven't heard before.

Such exercises with the use of non-classical tools become possible when there is already at least one academic biography of the actress, and Yakubova respectfully emphasizes the importance of the first and only thorough work about Irena Solska by Lidia Kuchtówna.³ She repeatedly refers to her predecessor, explaining why certain questions could not be covered in 1980; Kuchtówna's work was published in communist Poland, which, as we read in Solska's autobiography, the actress did not accept. Yakubova also emphasizes that she is not the first to deconstruct the great theatrical myths of the Polish theater, and mentions for example the well-known Polish theater historian Jan Michalik and his contribution to rethinking the creative heritage of Tadeusz Pawlikowski – a contemporary and close colleague of Irena Solska. At the same time, the author is fully aware of her methods and goals and although the names of Freud, Lacan, Žižek are rarely mentioned in the text, every time the blade of a psychoanalyst or deconstructionist prepares historical material to the finest fabrics; “Capricious diva” – you pay tribute to the methodological skills of the Russian researcher and the power of skillfully applied tools of intellectual labor.

Obviously, for Yakubova as a theater historian, the dates and facts are very important, and she is accurate and scrupulous in describing the sources. Nevertheless, she chose not a chronological, but a problematic approach. Based on this principle, the following chapters were constructed: *Mrs. Acne as a mirror of the art revolution, Yesterday and today by Irena Solska* (chapter 2, which contains an analysis of the actress's autobiography), *What are the benefits of paper – Solska's letters* (chapter 3, which deals with her epistolary heritage), *Her director, her playwright* (chapter 4, devoted to Solska's collaboration with director Tadeusz Pawlikowski, and her personal and creative relationship with Jerzy Żuławski), *Wandering Psyche. Irena Solska in the visual culture of her time* (chapter 5, which analyses the paintings and graphics of contemporaries, photography), *Ibsenist?* (chapter 6, devoted to Ibsen in the her acting repertoire), *Star of acting in the age of directing* (chapter 7, which discusses roles, collaborations with directors Leon Schiller, Juliusz Osterwa, Stanisława Wysocka, as well as her personal managing and directing experience). The text concludes with two epilogues: *Post-theater* and *The actress leaves the stage*. The appendix contains selected excerpts from the actress's autobiography and letters. Illustrations include photos of the actress in roles and in life, paintings, graphic works of artists, postcards, etc. They serve as visual sources, to which the researcher systematically refers.

³ Kuchtówna, L. (1980). *Irena Solska*. Warszawa.



Irena Solska, photographed by Jules Mien, ca. 1896, The National Library of Poland

The principle of interdisciplinary research allows us to consider the fate of the star actress as a phenomenon of her time, in the dynamics of complex socio-political, socio-cultural, aesthetic-technological and ideological-emancipatory changes from the late nineteenth to the late 1930s. The actress appears every time in a new reflection, against the background of numerous events and phenomena. Thanks to this, a wide range of representatives of the theatrical, literary, and artistic environment of the time emerges: Tadeusz Pawlikowski, Ludwik Solski, Witkacy, Stanisława Wysocka, Leon Schiller, Juliusz Osterwa, Stanisław Wyspiański, Stanisław Przybyszewski, Stanisław Rossowski, Jerzy Żuławski, Leopold Staff, Władysław Jastrzębiec-Zalewski, Ivo Vojnović, Stefan Krzywoszewski, Zofia Nałkowska – this list is by no means complete. We often meet them in unexpected, frank, intimate, funny, dramatic situations – so this is a history of Polish theater written “from within”, in terms of primarily human relationships, which are inextricably intertwined novels of love, creativity, life, birth and death, psychology and physiology.

For Nataliya Yakubova, of course, the central motif is Irena Solska’s stage work: psychology, methodology, technology, aesthetic principles of her acting; paradoxes of critical reception; the status of an actress in society and in the theater; changes in theatrical systems and ways of adapting to these changes. Based on observations in the book, many interesting and important conclusions were drawn: about the direct influence of the actress’s personality on the dramatic images created for her (for example, the genesis of the title of Żuławski’s famous play *Ijola* is revealed); on the influence of the repertoire of that time on the development of sexuality and feminine identity of the actress (in particular, autobiographical parallels in the fate of Solska and her stage heroine Nora; desires of the mistress).

The figure of the mother, Bronisława Poświkowa, was brought into sharper relief as the person who had the greatest influence on Solska (rather than the men, as was commonly believed). Yakubova argues that it is from her mother that the actress inherited not only the gene for mental health issues but also the principle of converting “madness” into work (p. 65), which ensured her survival in the most difficult periods of her life: “on stage by force of talent I become the heroine of dreams, I live their life – not my own, not my own” (p. 68). No less important is the author’s conclusion about “libidinal force” as the nature of the special magnetism of Solska-woman and Solska-actress, about the problem of mastering excessive sexual energy on the threshold of the stage, about the actress’s fundamental reluctance to wear the traditional skirt to please society.

One of the important research problems was the difficulty of evaluating the acting work of Solska, in particular, given the often opposing responses of critics. After all, the reviewers emphasized the disembodiedness, “phantom” nature of Solska’s heroines (e.g. Katerina Ivanovna in Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punish-*

ment), carved as if “from ivory” (Ibsen’s *Hedda Gabler*), and the deceitfulness of women, which paradoxically again combined with the “angelic likeness of the unattainable ideal” (Jacqueline in Musset’s *Dedication*). What dominated Solska’s work: short-lived enlightenments or strong rational constructs, excited by intuition and creative inspiration? “Sculptural”, “picturesque” or “graphic” (p. 214)? “Intellectualism” or “hysteria” (p. 164), Yakubova asks. And she is in no hurry to answer the questions in “black and white”, preferring polyphony to unambiguity, parabolicity to linearity. The author enjoys finding ambivalences, the tension that arises between opposing interpretations of Solska’s contemporaries and is inherent in the structure of her roles. Thus, the researcher demonstrates how Solska, playing one and the same part, is praised by some critics for “ennobling” the heroine, while another scolds her for excessive credulity in the “vital” side of the role (Żuławski’s *Myrtle Wreath*). No less interesting is the researcher revealing the principle of split personality (woman/sleepwalker) in the structure of the image of Ijola, written for Solska by Żuławski. Yakubova reveals the same ambivalence of chastity and eroticism in the role of Psyche from Żuławski’s play *Eros and Psyche*. It is this dynamic tension of dichotomy, ambiguity recorded in the names of individual units: “Mysteries of the multifaceted” (p. 159), “Playing Ijola, dreaming of Phryne” (p. 180), “Hedda: a demon or not a demon?” (p. 250).

Another important issue that concerned the author of the monograph was the the relationship between the actress-representative of the “star theater” and the director’s theater, which was actively formed in Poland in the first half of the twentieth century (chapter 7). Yakubova examines the stereotypical opinion that Solska’s leaving the stage was connected to her incompatibility with the director’s theater in several ways: she carefully analyses Solska’s relations with directors – from Ludwik Solski and Tadeusz Pawlikowski to Leon Schiller and Juliusz Osterwa (showing the actress’s involvement in the works of modern directors, her collaboration with them and openness to new aesthetic experience). Yakubova considers Solska’s acting achievements of the 1920s and 1930s (emphasizing the constant power of acting, the diversity of the actress’s repertoire), and separately researches her personal managing and directing theatrical practice (discovering interesting and consonant temporal artistic and civic ideas proclaimed by Solska). In addition, she investigates the history of Parkinson’s disease and its possible impact on the stage activities of the actress, concluding that it was not the cause of Solska’s marginalization in the theatrical environment.

The paradox of marginalization of “late” Solska gives Yakubova grounds for raising an extremely urgent problem: theater history is still written as a success story of renowned “phenomena” and names, while less notable events recede “into the margins” of historical and theatrical narratives. It is from the margins of theatrical attention that Yakubova retrieves not only Solska’s acting parts, but also

her managing and directing work, placing them in the centre of research, emphasizing the artist's experience, not always successful, but extremely revealing in its novelty and openness to actual aesthetic explorations. In the chapter *Mrs. Director*, Yakubova opens little-known pages of the history of the studio theater in Warsaw, named after Stefan Żeromski, which was headed by Solska in 1932–1934: a theater that with its bold themes, according to the author of the monograph, “tested the limits of democracy” (p. 354). Solska's openness to radical explorations was revealed already in her theater's first performance: Żeromski's play *Rose* (1932), set not on the stage, but in a big white apartment room. Here, the new relations between the actor and the spectator, the space of action and the space of contemplation were tested. No wonder that this theater – albeit not for long – was a real territory of alternative theatrical practices in Poland.

Just as the author of the book builds complex parabolic research scenarios from the completely linear autobiography of the actress, her correspondence, reviews and other documents, so the reader constructs his or her own cross-cutting plots in the process of their development. These include, for example, narratives of home, family, motherhood, corporality, sexuality, and disease. The story of everyday life, the story of the “survival” of a woman in her time – all these are the plots of such a complex and partially incomprehensible topos of the Other. All of them form and complement the main meta-plot of the story: “actress and time”. In this sense, Yakubova's analytic text belongs to the part of gynecriticism that Elaine Showalter defined as cultural.⁴

Reconstructing the multidimensionality of Solska's existence in her time and environment, Yakubova presents her as an actress, daughter, wife, mother, mistress, housewife, public figure, and active writer. Regarding the last category, analyzing Solska's autobiography, Yakubova remarks: “The text could serve as an illustration for the concept of *écriture féminine*, developed by French feminists in the 1970s. If such a concept is suitable for describing performative acts, then we can say that in her text Solska gives the status of *écriture féminine* and her own game...” (pp. 91–92). The symptomaticity and importance of this conclusion are unquestionable because it is through the study of performativity that theater studies have included issues of gender and feminism. As Diana Poskuta-Włodek emphasizes, voicing the opinion of her colleague Inga Iwasiów, the discovery of “procedural and performative features of gender in theater and drama gave the opportunity for new reflections on women's theater”.⁵ Therefore, Yakubova repeatedly uses the category of performativity: describing the modern play *The*

⁴ Showalter, E. 1981. Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness. *Critical Inquiry*, 8(2), 179–205, p. 184.

⁵ Poskuta-Włodek, D. (2015). Zmowa kobiet? Inscenizacje feministyczne w polskim teatrze dwudziestolecia międzywojennego. *Przestrzenie Teorii*, 11, 105–120, p. 106.

Hideout/Kryjówka and emphasizing the performativity of memory (p. 14), defining Solska's stage appearances in the categories of performativity (p. 258), speaking about the performative deconstruction of language "as a way for the actress to turn the defects of the disease into performing techniques" (p. 350). The researcher answers her almost rhetorical question, "What – performative – gestures can change reality?" (p. 362), with, perhaps, one of the main conclusions of the book: for Solska, such power was wielded by the stage – a shelter from the world and from herself, and at the same time, a place of confession and maximum internal freedom.

Feminist discourse manifests itself in the monograph not only in the above-mentioned individual "narratives of women", but also in a not very noticeable but significant gender trend: built mostly on the opposition of male and female worlds as dominant and subordinate, Solska's history is harmonized and humanized, when her complicity with Stanisława Wysocka appears, or the mother is mentioned, or – an early relationship with her daughter, with whose health in mind the actress significantly limited her stage activity. Speaking of the Solska-Wysocka tandem, the author of the book emphasizes the position of woman in culture, in which until then she had traditionally played only "a dependent, subordinate role (determined by her attitude to men as the protagonist of narratives in culture)" (p. 329).

Much can be said about the feminist discourse of the book because it permeates all levels of research. In particular, the book mentions Irena Solska's lectures entitled *The Cry of a New Husband*, with which Solska traveled around Poland in 1930 (p. 331). Yakubova notes that in these lectures Solska, speaking about marriage, quoted American activists. In this context, it is impossible to miss Virginia Woolf and her famous *A Room of One's Own*, which became one of the cornerstones of the feminist discourse of the twentieth century. It is likely that Solska was familiar with Woolf's work, as she was speaking of respect for women and recognition of her equality with her husband, defining herself as a self-sufficient person.

Whatever the case, it is worth taking into account the imagery of Woolf and her statement that every woman writer, in order to create, must have her own room and means of survival. In a sense, Yakubova's book can be called such a virtual room of Irena Solska, "open" and reconstructed from certain fragments of her life, thoughts, experiences, relationships, decisions, what happened and what did not come true... For Yakubova, as an archaeologist-reconstructor of this "room", are equally important are the actress's terrible memory of the severed arm of a country boy and her memories of a night walk with Przybyszewski, a meeting with Pawlikowski in Lviv over coffee, a visit to the terminally ill Wyspiański, the unachievable plan to marry artist Osmolski, the constant worries about the health



Irena Solska with her daughter Hania, photographed by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, Zakopane 1912, The Tatra Museum in Zakopane

of little Haniutka, the search for another way to normalize their own lives, the shyness that prevented the actress to rehearse, the brutal rudeness of Solsky as a husband, and her stage success. The author of the book introduces us to the droplets of the conscious and subconscious actress, to the dark depths of trauma and fear. And the theme of means of survival, by the way, constantly echoes in these walls.

Room-apartment-house is a very important motive for the researcher observing the fate of her heroine. No wonder Yakubova quotes her words of love for small apartments and clean whitewashed walls (p. 111). And no wonder, perhaps, the modern play by Passini and Dołowy about Solska as a Savior of the Jews is called *The Hideout* and takes place in the attic. And it is no coincidence that Yakubova thinks of Solska's fate as the fatal path of the "star" from the light of the ramp to the dark attic of History, rhetorically asking: "Why so?"

It is clear that focusing on one thing inevitably leads to the marginalization of the other, so something definitely remains outside the "room" and the attention of the researcher. Thus, for Yakubova, Solska's experience of the First World War turned out to be unimportant, although in the memoirs of the actress (appendices, pp. 400–404) considerable space is devoted to this period. Her emotional stories

about the beginning of the war, nursing courses, and work at the Krakow hospital (even there she was reminded of her dubious reputation of a “vamp”), inspired recitation and speeches at a rally held by Piłsudski in Wadowice, joyful anticipation of Poland’s liberation, that extraordinary time the children – and Solska’s six-year-old daughter in particular – ran away from home to join the Legions. Perhaps this is because the experience of war in your territory is deeply personal, and it needs a separate, sharpened sense?

You can see something else. Extremely sensitive to the finest details, Yakubova touches but does not seek to express the opinion, which itself arises from the quotes and opinions of the actress, about the development of Polish theater after the Second World War. It is, obviously, a question of Solska’s total rejection of the system of Stanisławski as the only legitimate language of the theater imposed by the communist authorities of Poland (following the example of the USSR). Solska protested against long rehearsals (p. 52), probably not only because she was a representative of a different type of theater, but also because her theater, close to Schiller's ideas, was associated with a free Poland, not enslaved by foreign ideology. No wonder – despite all the later differences between the artists – that Solska responded unequivocally to the death of Schiller: “Schiller died yesterday afternoon – the last hope of the revival of our art went with him” (p. 53). Reading these lines, the key word is the word “our”.

Paying tribute to the author’s immersion in Polish historical discourse, it is nevertheless worth noting today’s need to take into account the differences between the contemporary and current geopolitical realities. At least, the term “Eastern Borderlands of Poland” (pp. 88, 258, 398) today requires – albeit briefly – additional academic commentary, as it contains a clear colonial component of the territories of Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukrainian lands, now independent states. This is all the more important since the problems and approaches of feminist and postcolonial critique are very similar to a worldview and instrumental point of view. Inattention to the “borderlands” can explain inaccuracy, in particular, in the reproduction of the name of one of the cities where Solska toured with Reduta: Lusk instead of Lutsk (p. 301). This is obviously an inaccuracy in the reading of the Polish name of this city: Łuck.

Sometimes, in the heat of advocating for her heroine, Yakubova shifts the emphasis in favor of “her ward”. Thus, speaking of Ibsen’s *Rosmersholm* in 1920, directed by Arnold Szyfman, Yakubova explains the interest of critics in Karol Adwentowicz with the fact that the actor had previously worked on provincial stages (p. 262). By interpreting his success in this way, the researcher somewhat diminishes the strength and self-sufficiency of his talent and skill, as it is known that the stage works of this artist deserved the recognition of reviewers, regardless of where and when they were played. And the fragment quoted here from Kornel

Makuszyński's article about Adwentowicz's passion for acting in deaf corners and small scenes can only emphasize the actor's special passion for touring the most remote places of the Polish lands, characteristic of him all his life – both during his periods of stable stationary work (in Lviv) and of independent theatrical activity (the 1920s). We can assume that such “shifts” occur frequently because they are inevitable, but they can be identified only by a deep connoisseur of the history of Polish theater, which the present reviewer does not pertain to be.

However, despite these small reservations, the virtual “room”, and in fact the whole “Solska House”, delicately and consistently reconstructed by Nataliya Yakubova, impresses with the strength of the conceptual construction and the depth of penetration into its most secret places. Finally, let us mention Woolf and her ironic assertion that women's stories have a right at least as additions to men's – academic – history. Starting from Woolf and synthesizing the ideas of Jacques Derrida and other researchers, the acclaimed gender historian Joan Wallach Scott spoke of the extreme importance of such appendices for finding what is missing, what is necessary for completeness.⁶ In this sense, Yakubova's monograph is that important part of our knowledge about Irena Solska the actress and the woman, without which the memory of her is incomplete, and henceforth – impossible. For the same reason, Yakubova's book is an excellent methodological textbook for those who want to repeat or continue her path.

Has so much changed since director Solsky made fun of his wife and talented actress Irena? Just as Yakubova's book arrived in my mail, for the first time in its history, a discussion about violence in the Ukrainian theater broke out. Is it any wonder that Oksana Cherkashina, a young Ukrainian actress with successful experience in modern Polish theater, became the inspirer of a heated conversation about the rights, dignity, and her own voice of a woman and an actress? Thus, the book about Irena Solska becomes even more relevant and important – not only for an academic reader.

Translated by Sofiia Harbuziuk

⁶ Scott, J. W. (2001). Women's History. In P. Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (pp. 43–70). Cambridge, p. 50.