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Theater/Performance Historiography

A Preamble

The field of theater/performance historiography is getting crowded. What used to be an undefined and underdetermined field some thirty years ago is now a complex assemblage of thoughts and practices echoing the inner chambers of recent theoretical and practical turns. As evidenced by recent publications, on the one hand, editors are interested in exploring the genealogy of theater/performance historiography to show its constant state of evolution and renegotiation; on the other hand, theater/performance historiography is infused with the tenets of

critical media theory/history.¹The ineluctable consequence of such formations are the diverse ways of explaining how the past is seen and deployed whenever it surfaces in theater and performance.

This issue of *Pamiętnik Teatralny* gestures towards current work devoted to theater/performance historiography published in the Anglo-American academe. Reflecting on insights about the complex nature and the mediality of historical knowledge, we would like to offer a collection of essays which, in their singularity, draw attention to internal contradictions prompted by tensions between 1) real abstractions of time, space, and matter, which are used to frame academic practices, and 2) events and objects, which are determined historically not only by past and present imaginations, but also by how time, space, and matter function within the field of theater/performance historiography.² We ask: How are we to think about the ways of housing the past (the archive, the event, the object) and the experience of the past (time, space, matter)? How are we to think about historiography in ways that are not only not dualistic (e.g., self and other, mainstream and margin), but that facilitate seeing historical subjects as *unsettled by* (rather than *settled in*) time, as riddled with contradictions (rather than reflective of a status quo), and as constructs of meaning (rather than as regulated thought)?

Ultimately, as these questions imply and the essays contend, if every historiographic gesture is a process of assembling and activating what the past and present historical, ideological, or academic status quo controls, this dialectics explicates the dynamics and the contradictions between multiple temporalities and spatialities housed in one and the same object or event.

To substantiate this point, and as an introduction to the essays in this volume, let me offer the following preamble.

In “Time and History: Critique of the Instant and the Continuum,” Giorgio Agamben notes that:

Every conception of history is invariably accompanied by a certain experience of time which is implicit in it, conditions it, and thereby has to be elucidated. . . . The original

¹ See Claire Cochrane and Jo Robinson, eds., *The Methuen Drama Handbook of Theatre History and Historiography* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350034327>; Tracy C. Davis and Peter W. Marx, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Theater and Performance Historiography* (New York: Routledge, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351271721>.

² Beyond and above Karl Marx’s break with an empiricist or neopositivist usage of the terms “abstract” and “concrete,” the 1857 introduction to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* establishes a clear break with a humanist, or anthropological concept of abstraction defined as a fantasy or a diversion regarding all political (the State) or religious (God) representations. In its stead, it introduces the notion of “real abstraction”—an irreconcilable contradiction—viewed as a material force operating in the world and both shaping the relations of production as well as historically determining the mode of production, including academic thought, which is recognized as a social, historical, and transindividual phenomenon. See Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. S. W. Ryazanskaya (New York: International Publishers, 1970), 206; and Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology*, trans. Martin Sohn-Rethel (London: Macmillan, 1978).

task of a genuine revolution, therefore, is never merely to “change the world,” but also—and above all—to “change time.” Modern political thought has concentrated its attention on history, and has not elaborated a corresponding concept of time. Even historical materialism has until now neglected to elaborate a concept of time that compares with its concept of history.³

Agamben’s argument thus posits that it is necessary to detail how time has been defined as well as interiorized by different cultures at different times. He avers that the Greco-Roman concept of time is basically circular and continuous, dominated by the intelligibility that what is authentic in a human being is eternal and immutable. Thus, the Greeks regarded linear movement as inferior to reality, understood as permanent and perpetual. Circular movement, however, guarantees the unchanged preservation of things through repetition and continual return. For both Plato and Aristotle, time is circular and has no direction.⁴ The antithesis to Greek time is the Christian experience and conceptualization of time as a straight line. This time has a direction and a purpose: it develops irreversibly from the Creation to the Last Judgement, with a central point of reference, the incarnation of Christ, which shapes its development as a progression from the initial fall to redemption, with the help of the *ecclesia universalis*. Christianity “separates time from the natural movement of the stars to make it an essentially human, interior phenomenon,”⁵ thus laying the foundations for an experience of historicity. The modern concept of time, notes Agamben, is a secularization of rectilinear, irreversible Christian time over the circular motion of Greek time. As Nietzsche notes, this secularization of time promotes the idea of “process” and “infinite progress.” “Under the influence of the natural sciences, ‘development’ and ‘progress,’ which merely translate the idea of a chronologically oriented process, become the guiding categories of historical knowledge.”⁶ Agamben contrasts the Nietzschean trajectory of the understanding of the Western concept of time with Hegel’s and Marx’s treatment of time and history. Hegel’s conception of time, addressing the conjunction of spatial representations and temporal experience, is developed as a negation and dialectical domination of space. The nullification of the experience of space by time is the foundation of the metaphysical model in which thinking is essentially the negation of that which is immediately before us. The evolution of history is consequently produced in time—thus, it can never be grasped in an instant, but is a total social process. For Marx, history is not something that expresses the being-in-time of the human, but is defined by

³ Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1993), 91.

⁴ Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 92.

⁵ Agamben, 95.

⁶ Agamben, 97.

praxis—concrete activity as essence and origin. Praxis, in which human beings posit themselves as essence and origin, is the first historical act, or the founding act of history. In other words, this is human beings' original dimension of belonging to themselves as a species-being (*Gattungswesen*), from which alienation has temporarily removed them. Thus, history is not something into which a human being falls, as in Hegel, but it is determined by praxis, in which the human essence and human beings' belonging to the founding act of history elucidate a conflict with the existing modes of production.

At the end of the essay, Agamben suggests that it is no longer possible to adhere to the fundamental character of the Greek experience of time, which, through Aristotle's *Physics*, has for two millennia determined the Western representation of time as being a precise, infinite, quantified continuum, just as how it is no longer possible to conceive of historical events as spatio-temporal determinations in Newtonian absolute time and space. Agamben offers alternative concepts of time developed by Gnosticism and the Stoics. Its model is *cairos*, the abrupt and sudden conjunction where a decision to grasp an opportunity and life is fulfilled in the moment.

For history is not, as the dominant ideology would have it, man's servitude to continuous linear time, but man's liberation from it: the time of history and the *cairos* in which man, by his initiative, grasps favorable opportunity and chooses his own freedom in the moment.⁷

Whether or not one agrees with Agamben's brief history of time, his opening gambit and the essay itself are a powerful reminder that, today, time and space or historical events can no longer be viewed in terms of absolute time and absolute space (or real abstractions as Karl Marx would have it) but should be considered as "modes of thinking and not the conditions by which to live."⁸ How should today's theater/performance historiography be written in order to register not only that the central category of absolute time denies the reality of any contradiction of the past and the present framing of an event, but also that it can only bring forth an event saturated with experience controlled by the abstract and metaphysical concept of time?

The 2006 and 2012 issues of *History and Theory* take up this problem of time in historical theory. Two trends are highlighted: the awareness of multiple temporalities in one object (by Reinhart Koselleck) and a consideration of "presence" (by Eelco Runia). Koselleck sees early modernity as marking a shift from one experience of time and history to another, from history as a homogeneous, unchanging space

⁷ Agamben, 104.

⁸ Aylesa Forsee, *Albert Einstein: Theoretical Physicist* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 81.

to history as an indefinite and unstoppable movement to which every historical object, every action, and every intention is subjected. “What is taking place,” he writes, “is a temporalization of history, leading to the special kind of acceleration that characterizes our modern world.”⁹ A visual metaphor which accompanies this theoretical investigation of history is Koselleck’s close reading of Albrecht Altdorfer’s 1529 painting *The Battle of Alexander at Issus*. Koselleck draws attention to three modes of temporal experience: the irreversibility of events, the repeatability of events, and what he terms “the simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous,”¹⁰ suggesting through these three modes of time that historical events in the same space may have the same natural chronology despite totally different temporal organizations. Koselleck’s theory of multiple temporalities, organized in the form of temporal layers that have different origins and durations, and move at different speeds, is an alternative to the notion of time as empty, linear, and homogeneous.

Runia pursues “presence” by examining memorials and commemorations, which he sees as attempts to “be in touch”—either literally or figuratively—with people, things, events, and feelings that made you the person you are now. As in history, a transfer of “presence” occurs in these spaces deriving from such phenomena as the incorporation of original material (soil, wreckage, dust) or from naming. So viewed, Runia argues, it is not meaning that a space transfers, but presence. Runia’s argument for “presence” is derived from his thesis that “what is pursued in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial,”¹¹ or in having a diamond made “from the carbon of your loved one as a memorial to their unique life,”¹² is *not* “meaning” but what, for the lack of a better word, he calls “presence.”¹³ Located outside of the philosophy of history, Runia’s “presence”—laced in-between Roland Barthes’s reality effect and Alain Badiou’s passion of the Real—relates to Pierre Nora’s “places of memory” project in its emphasis on the mechanics of discontinuity and the presence of absence, both of which illuminate our capacity to surprise ourselves. According to Runia, “coming to grips with discontinuity requires an adjustment many philosophers of history will hesitate to make: to focus not on the past but on the present, not on history *as what is irremediably gone*, but on history *as ongoing process*.”¹⁴ Such a proposition suggests that our present-day reality and the discipline of history—the assemblage of texts, methods, codes, habits, topics, trends, fashions, and the like—offer themselves as multiple *surfaces* that consist of different historical depths.

⁹ Reinhart Koselleck quoted in Helge Jordheim, “Against Periodization: Koselleck’s Theory of Multiple Temporalities,” *History and Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012): 158.

¹⁰ Jordheim, “Against Periodization,” 162.

¹¹ Eelco Runia, “Presence,” *History and Theory* 45, no. 1 (2006): 5.

¹² Runia, “Presence,” 5.

¹³ Runia, 5.

¹⁴ Runia, 8, emphasis original.

If indeed such propositions are tenable, theater/performance historiography can help us understand the archive and its objects/events as *surfaces*—surfaces that have different historical depths organized in the form of multiple, nonsynchronous temporalities, which have different origins and durations, and move at different speeds to disclose the tensions between conflicting imaginations at once past and present.

To wit: consider how the essays in this collection deal with time and its:

- multiple temporalities in one object/event that has different origins and durations, and moves at different speeds;
- continuity and change;
- discordant temporalities;
- valences of time.

Following these insights, it could be suggested that every conception of history is invariably accompanied not only by a certain experience of time, which is implicit in it, conditions it, and thereby has to be elucidated, but also by a certain experience of space and matter, which are implicit in it, condition it, and thereby have to be elucidated, too.

Consider the most recent treatment of “matter” in the new materialism, which claims to be a departure from the Marxist understanding of “matter” in terms of alienation from the means of production; or from the understanding of matter in the nineteenth-century, which developed an extremely rigid framework for understanding both sciences and the arts, supported by the fundamental concepts of classical physics, space, time, and matter; or, finally, from the more textual approaches of the so-called cultural turn deemed inadequate in light of the awareness of changes in the environment, demographics, and economics in the twenty-first century.¹⁵

Parallel to the new materialism and flat ontology, attributing “an equal ontological dignity to each individual thing,”¹⁶ there is a trajectory that discloses historical and material tensions, contradictions and conflicts *in* space as well as contradictions *of* space that are made visible and concrete in such diverse past works as those of Giambattista Vico, Walter Benjamin, and Henri Lefebvre, which challenge the presentism of current genealogical and critical media turns in theater/performance historiography.

The attraction of Vico for the investigation of the politics of matter in theater and performance historiography is apparent for three reasons. First, in *The New Science* (1725–1744), he rejects the Hebrew Christian view, according to which history and the basic institutions, both sacred and secular, were established by God or Christ.¹⁷

¹⁵ Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2010), 4, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822392996>.

¹⁶ Tristan Garcia, *Form and Object: A Treatise on Things*, trans. Mark Allan Ohm and Jon Cogburn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 4.

¹⁷ *The New Science of Giambattista Vico: Unabridged Translation of the Third Edition (1744)*, trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501702990>.

By excluding the Judeo-Christian tradition and institutions from the range within which the new science claims full competence, his story of civilization puts forth an axiom of indefinitely numerous independent origins; it gives no priority to any one people, thereby refuting the principle of European centrality by way of Greece, and argues that if certain cultures were responsible for specific inventions, changes in human affairs are governed equally and separately by causes within human nature which are not simply a matter of arbitrary choice or caprice but are conditioned by the historical and social context as well as civic institutions. Vico, thus, anticipates Adam Smith, August Comte, and Marx's view that there is no human essence to be found in individuals as such, since the essence of humanity is the ensemble of social relations, or the developing system of institutions.

Extending Vico's arguments to the discussion of matter today, attention should be given to the modes of thinking and models of action that exist within theater/performance historiography. The focus of the operation should not be on the way reality is experienced, but on the exploration of the mediality of reality by drawing attention to the inner contradictions of social and ideological organizations which present a challenge to both social networks as well as to ontologies of the present. This materialism of the encounter is a kind of spatial dialectics confronting not what matter/the object could be, but the inadequation between objects and those aspects of objects which reality/history glosses over to assign present intelligibility to them.

To be more precise, recall Walter Benjamin's 1937 essay "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian" wherein Benjamin draws attention to a break in the continuum of a cultural unfolding, which he explains using a dialectical mode of historical materialism.¹⁸ Historical materialism is an antidote to Leopold von Ranke and Hegel's history as an epic history promoting a contemplative attitude towards the object and the past. That is to say, works of art, or objects, in a historically dialectical mode, illuminating a continuous process of change, demonstrate how their reception becomes a component of the effect which a work of art, or an object, has upon us today. Benjamin refers to this condition of a continuous process of change as the state of unrest which demands that the contemplative attitude towards the object be abandoned in order for us to "become conscious of the critical constellation in which precisely this fragment of the past finds itself in precisely this moment."¹⁹ In other words, as he states in another context, the human sense of perception is determined by physiology/nature and by historical circumstances as well.²⁰ The goal of historical materialism is therefore to replace the epic element

¹⁸ Walter Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian," trans. Knut Tarnowski, in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, eds. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum, 2002), 225–253.

¹⁹ Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs," 227.

²⁰ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 222.

with the constructive element, which will liberate the forces that remain captive in historicism's "once upon a time." Thus, it is directed "towards a consciousness of the present which explodes the continuum of history."²¹ Thus, while historicism presents the eternal image of the past, historical materialism draws attention to a given experience *with* the past, an experience which stands unique.

For Benjamin, the historian articulates an economy which is not present in classifications of Marxist use and exchange value—that is to say, the historian articulates the material economy of objects and of mnemotechnics in the space of the now: "the world is present, and indeed ordered, in each of [the] objects."²² What we are presented with are objects and fragments which, like the shards of a broken mirror, cut through epistemologies or phenomenologies that have inhabited the structures of thought since the Enlightenment. The historian emphasizes how these singular objects or fragments are brought to one's attention, how they are described, how they are made meaningful, how they become worthy of record or note by the past and the present, what labor formal arguments, emplotment, and ideological paradigms perform to secure their archivable place, what tensions are revealed by disclosing the situatedness of the object and the subject in the "time of the now" (*Jetztzeit*) and, finally, how these events or fragments participate in private and civic life forming cultural memories (mnemotechnics) or obscuring their visibility (necropolitics).²³

To wit: consider how the essays in this collection deal with matter/object and its:

- site of formation, transformation, and revindication;
- its materiality and the state of unrest as opposed to the ideological claims of apparently stable objects;
- the notion that the world is contained in the object (which/whose world?);
- the inadequations between what the object is and what the (social, political, ideological, etc.) status quo wants the objects to be;
- "materialism of the encounter": "materialism" defined as human *activity* within the "material conditions of life" (hence, to understand the content of *ideas*, one must understand the reasons for their creation, and the capacities of those who produced them, and these have to do with how people organize themselves as individuals and how they arrange the physical world around them, which itself is dependent on the geological and climatic surroundings of a person, who is never acting alone, but acts instead within a social context conditioned greatly by how they organize themselves in groups);
- a critical constellation of fragments organized in a heterarchical way;

²¹ Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs," 227.

²² Walter Benjamin, "Convolute H: The Collector," in *The Arcade Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 207.

²³ Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 9–41.

- the texture of historical knowledge: mnemotechnics and necropolitics.

The spatial experience of a constellation lets the object/fragment slip away from both the imperious presence of the metaphysical and the presence of the regulated Newtonian temporality, both of which structure their narratives along a historical trajectory. This spatial aspect of a constellation resonates with Henri Lefebvre's notion of spatial dialectics.

Lefebvre avers that space embraces a multitude of intersections, each with its own assigned location, as well as representations of the relations of production which occur in space—representations in the form of buildings, monuments, controlled landscapes, and art—policed and subverted by social groups identified as the forces of negation. This multitude of intersections can be explained with the help of a conceptual triad drawing attention to: *spatial practice*, which embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation; *representations of space*, which are tied to the relations of production and to the “order” which those relations impose; and *representational spaces*, embodying complex symbolism linked to the clandestine side of social life, and also to art.²⁴

If indeed every society produces its own space, a socially constructed space differs from the classical/Newtonian science of space in that it represents a political use of knowledge as well as implying an ideology designed to conceal that use by defining space as absolute or abstract.²⁵ According to Lefebvre, the classical/Newtonian science of space cannot really tolerate contradiction or antagonism in the nature of space. It can accept dualities or dual properties of space only if there is a possibility of resolving these dualities so that a smooth surface of space can be constructed. Space, in geometry or topology, is the location, even a set of multiple locations, of coherence or consensus. This may be the reason why from “Heraclitus to Hegel and Marx, dialectical thinking has been bound up with time: contradictions voice or express the forces and the relationships between forces that clash within a history (and within history in general).”²⁶ It is only when the illusion of a transparent, abstract, or absolute space is completely dispelled that it is possible to see the degree to which the classical logic of space did not allow for the elucidation of social relationships positioned in it.

²⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 33.

²⁵ In theater/performance studies, there is a growing body of work which references Lefebvre's critique of space. See, for example, Joanne Tompkins, *Unsettling Space: Contestations in Contemporary Australian Theatre* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Michael McKinnie, *City Stages: Theatre and Urban Space in a Global City* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); D. J. Hopkins and Kim Solga, eds., *Performance and the Global City* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and Joanne Tompkins, *Theatre's Heterotopias: Performance and the Cultural Politics of Space* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

²⁶ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 292.

If it is no longer conceived as abstract or formal, “space is what makes it possible for the economic to be integrated into the political.”²⁷ For Lefebvre, however, not only is space integrated into capitalism, but capitalism has been producing its own space from the moment it superseded the Church and the State in the early eighteenth century. Today, the saliency of the spatial in capitalism calls for a different approach to the present global historical situation. “The appropriate method, however, is no longer that of Hegel, nor is it that of Marx, which was based on an analysis of historical time, of temporality,” but we find ourselves obliged, continues Lefebvre,

to accept the idea of a dialectical centrality, . . . this is because there is a connection between space and the dialectics; in other words, there are spatial contradictions which imply and explain contradictions in historical time, though without being reducible to them.²⁸

This spatial dialectics, which must not be reduced to a logical and purely formal mental space does not refer to a remote idea of Utopia in time.²⁹ Unlike dialectics based on an analysis of historical time and of temporality (Hegel and Marx), spatial dialectics focuses on the contradictions which imply and explain contradictions in historical time without being reducible to them. In other words, the notion of contradiction is not restricted to temporality or historicity but draws attention to contradictions and conflicts *in* space as well as to contradictions *of* space. As Lefebvre asserts:

Contradictions *of* space . . . envelop historical contradictions, presuppose them, superimpose themselves upon them, carry them to a higher level, and amplify them in the process of reproducing them. Once this displacement has been effected, the new contradictions may tend to attract all the attention, diverting interest to themselves and seeming to crowd out or even absorb the old conflicts. The impression is false, however. Only by means of a dialectical analysis can the precise relationships between contradictions *in* space and contradictions *of* space be unravelled, and a determination made as to which are becoming attenuated, which accentuated.³⁰

Spatial dialectics draws attention to contradictions *in* and *of* space which disclose other social and spatial interstices, other possibilities, different in character from those in effect within the system. Spatial dialectics links mental space and social

²⁷ Lefebvre, 321.

²⁸ Lefebvre, 331.

²⁹ See Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2010), 612. See also Lefebvre, 292–351.

³⁰ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 334, emphasis original.

space in a manner that surmounts Euclidean (geometric and optical) space, abstract space, a false consciousness of homogeneous, or fragmented space.

To wit: consider how the essays in this collection deal with space and its:

- multilayered spatialities in one object/event;
- spatial dialectics: contradictions in space and the contradictions of spaces;
- the Newtonian space of consensus versus the science of space that implies an ideology behind its production: spatial practice, representations of space, representational spaces;
- preservation, renovation, restructuring.

Following these insights about the complex mediality of historical knowledge (about time, matter, and space, which are not abstract and absolute categories but are site and time specific; about a mode of thinking about the Other pointing towards a consciousness of the present which explodes the continuum of history; about contradictions *in* space and the contradictions *of* space—a form of spatial dialectics; and about a critical constellation revealing objects in a state of unrest), we would like to offer a collection of essays which, in their singularity, respond to the questions posed at the beginning of this essay: How are we to think about the ways of housing the past (the archive, the event, the object) and the experience of the past (time, space, matter)? How are we to think about historiography in ways that are not only not dualistic (e.g., self and other, mainstream and margin), but that facilitate seeing historical subjects as unsettled by (rather than settled in) time, as riddled with contradictions (rather than reflective of a status quo), and as constructs of meaning (rather than as regulated thought)?

These issues will be taken up by an array of scholars I have invited to contribute essays. Rosemarie Bank explores the tension between inertia and change in cultural historical studies staging “American” histories. She contends that, rather than thinking in terms of core and margin and related binaries of difference and “othering,” inertia and change as historiographical strategies focus on the dynamics that affect social systems and structures, preserving some systems to conserve energy while introducing or forsaking others. Michal Kobialka addresses how the notion of history was altered by the embedding of commerce into the discursive field of eighteenth-century Britain; and how this historiographic trajectory was obscured (and, ultimately, eliminated) by the scientific or materialist notion of history that emerged in the nineteenth century and which is still dominant today. Using spatial dialectics and borderland thinking (Gloria Anzaldúa), David Melendez discusses a highly popular early twentieth century pageant drama, *The Mission Play*, to unsettle missionary practice and to reveal how missions were sites where indigenous and colonial realities were in constant conflict, as illustrated by the missionary practice of, for example, keeping time using the mission bell. Loren Kruger analyzes the politics of time by following the traces of the Commune primarily in the 2012 performance of Bertolt Brecht’s *The Days of the Commune* (1949) on New York sites claimed by the Occupy Movement in 2011. She reminds

us about the argument of Brecht's contemporary, Ernst Bloch, for cultural action grounded in an understanding of historical disappointment to anticipate setbacks while maintaining hope for future revolution. Scott Magelssen argues that the staged encounters between museum visitors and dioramic displays of dinosaur fossils in natural history and science museum spaces have been designed to capitalize on and performatively reify white anxiety about the exotic other and have served as surrogates for white fears and racist ideologies, which have permeated the formations of modernity and inform today's modes of inquiry. William Daddario presents Jay Wright's play *Lemma* as a historiographic challenge and also as a piece of idiorhythmic American theater steeped in many traditions typically kept distinct by academic discourse, such as West African cosmology, Enlightenment philosophy, jazz music theory, Ancient Greek theater, neo-Baroque modifications of Christian theology, pre-Columbian Indigenous ways of knowing, and the lives of African slaves in the New World. Patricia Ybarra, while drawing on theories of the necropolitical (Achille Mbembe) and gore capitalism (Sayak Valencia) in relation to conceptions of queer eschatology and capitalist violence, considers how Reza Abdoh's *Father Was a Peculiar Man* (1990), performed in the Meatpacking District of Manhattan, exemplifies the historiographic possibilities of performance through its embodiment of an eschatological vision of the world in which gender binary is performatively undone. Finally, using the idea of necroepistemology, Surafel Wondimu Abebe critiques the state of neoliberal historiography in Ethiopia and draws attention to a dismissed fragment of Ethiopian history, the 1974 socialist revolution, in order to revive enduring social questions and new imaginations dismissed by that historiography as the work of the global/local left. The essay ends with the current necroepistemic moment, a consequence of the workings of neoliberal Ethiopian historiography, to draw attention to the historically vulnerable people who are dying in Ethiopia today.

The essays in this volume contend, each in its own way, that, perhaps, explicating the dynamics and the contradictions between multiple temporalities and spatialities housed in one and the same object (or event) will lead us to consider how the dialectical tension between how we think about the housing of the past and the experience of the past can be a historiographic answer to that history which excarnates its objects (mnemotechnics) and bodies (necropolitics).



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Abstract

Theater/Performance Historiography: A Preamble

The introduction to the issue of *Pamiętnik Teatralny* which gestures towards current work on theater/performance historiography published in the Anglo-American academe. Reflecting on insights about the complex nature and the mediality of historical knowledge, we would like to offer a collection of essays which, in their singularity, draw attention to internal contradictions prompted by tensions between 1) time, space, and matter, which are used to frame

academic practices, and 2) events and objects, which are determined historically not only by past and present imaginations but also by how time, space, and matter function within the field of theater/performance historiography. We ask the following questions: How are we to think about the ways of housing the past (the archive, the event, the object) and the experience of the past (time, space, matter)? How are we to think about historiography in ways that are not only not dualistic (e.g., self and other, mainstream and margin), but that facilitate seeing historical subjects as *unsettled by* (rather than *settled in*) time, as riddled with contradictions (rather than reflective of a status quo), and as constructs of meaning (rather than as regulated thought)? And finally, how are we to negotiate the dynamics and the contradictions between multiple temporalities and spatialities housed in one and the same object or event?

Keywords

theater historiography, temporalities, spatialities, mediality of knowledge

Abstrakt

Historiografia teatru/performansu: Wprowadzenie

Wstęp do bloku tematycznego „Pamiętnika Teatralnego”, w którym poddano refleksji wątki podejmowane w anglo-amerykańskich pracach na temat historiografii teatru/performansu. Biorąc pod uwagę złożoną naturę i zapośredniczenie wiedzy historycznej, autorzy proponują zbiór esejów, które na różne sposoby zwracają uwagę na wewnętrzne sprzeczności wynikające z napięć między 1) czasem, przestrzenią i materią, wykorzystywanymi do tworzenia ram praktyk akademickich, a 2) wydarzeniami i przedmiotami badań, które są historycznie zdeterminowane nie tylko przez przeszłe i obecne wyobrażenia, ale także przez to, jak czas, przestrzeń i materia funkcjonują w historiografii teatru/performansu. W esejach postawiono następujące pytania: Jak można myśleć o sposobach ujmowania przeszłości (archiwum, wydarzenie, przedmiot badań) oraz o doświadczaniu przeszłości (czas, przestrzeń, materia)? Jak można myśleć o historiografii w sposób, który nie tylko jest niebinarny (np. ja i inny, główny nurt i margines), lecz także ułatwia postrzeganie historycznych tematów/podmiotów jako rozwiniętych przez czas (a nie osadzonych w nim), pełnych sprzeczności (a nie odzwierciedlających *status quo*) i będących konstruktami znaczeniowymi (a nie znormalizowanymi ideami)? I wreszcie, jak można negocjować dynamikę i sprzeczności pomiędzy wieloma wymiarami czasowymi i przestrzennymi zawartymi w przedmiocie badań lub wydarzeniu historycznym?

Słowa kluczowe

historiografia teatru, czasowość, przestrzenność, zapośredniczenie wiedzy

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