

Abstracts

Moving Targets: An “Illogical” Theatre of Resistance in (Pre)Occupied Territory

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The notion of a theatre of resistance implies a society of coercion. It is difficult, but necessary, to gauge the efficacy of such theatres at a time in which everything, and consequently nothing, is political. That is, almost all theatres today proclaim a politics, and yet there is widespread resignation regarding the inevitability of capitalism – which is itself the predominant coercive force. This article proposes a theory of resistance via the theatre: radical theatre today must assume that our nations and we ourselves have become (pre)occupied by this coercive force and therefore, like the French *Résistance* during German occupation, must act “underground” and employ a strategy of “moving targets”.

I evaluate a performance from my own experience with the Christchurch Free Theatre: a devised production of Karl Kraus’ play *The Last Days of Mankind* that occurred uninvited in public spaces primarily to unsuspecting audiences. This case study led to the determination that, in an age in which any political intervention is seen as senseless disruption and a form of pointless violence, theatres of resistance must employ strategies increasingly similar (as with the *Résistance*) to those of terrorist actions.

Confusing Gender: Strategies for resisting objectification in the work of Split Britches

Emily Underwood (University of Glamorgan)

In this paper I will explore the construction of gender identity in the work of the feminist theatre company *Split Britches* with a particular focus on the show *What Tammy Needs to Know* by Lois Weaver. I begin by exploring two propositions - that all performance is inherently objectifying and that this problem is doubled for the female performer whose body is already socially identified as sexual other. I will examine strategies for resisting this social positioning that I have identified in *What Tammy Needs to Know* including:

1. Weaver’s foregrounding of the construction of her femininity, both as herself and as her character Tammy Whynot, and her highlighting of the labour and tools involved in this construction.
2. Weaver’s use of autobiography in order to transcend the subject/object divide and to create empathy with her audience.
3. How Weaver turns the gaze back on her spectators.

I will attempt to explore *how* Weaver achieves this and the impact it has on spectators of the work.

Accusing and Engaging the Audience through Theatreform: Griselda Gambaro's *Information for Foreigners*

Selena Burns (New York University)

How can theatre use innovative forms to explore issues of human rights in a way that engages the audience rather than merely presents to them? Rather than writing for a traditional proscenium stage, in her 1972 play *Information for Foreigners*, Argentinean playwright Griselda Gambaro has tour guides lead the audience in groups through various rooms and hallways in which actors recreate scenes of torture or oppression. Gambaro uses environmental theatre and sometimes Brechtian presentations to deconstruct the expected relationship between audience and actors—allowing her to use the audience's passivity to comment on the ethics of being a "silent observer" and to create opportunities for self-reflection and motivation for political action. The unique relationship with the live audience allowed by the theatrical medium and enhanced by the structure of Gambaro's play forcibly removes the distance the news consumer has with a media story. Gambaro's work has contemporary relevance in the US in a time where the media presents pictures of government sponsored torture, and the public is faced with the choice of responding or ignoring.

Antonio or the Message: Bourgeois conformism and the dictatorship of the Colonels in Greece (1967-1974)

Philip Hager (Royal Holloway)

This paper will engage with the analysis of Anagnostaki's play *Antonio or the Message* that was produced in Athens by Théâtre Technis in 1972. Anagnostaki commented on the bourgeois society and its structures, focusing mainly on the institution of family as the molecular unit of bourgeois society and the site of bourgeois reproduction (both biological and social). Violence is the catalyst of the play, blurring the borderline between private and public spaces. I will argue that, within the specific socio-political context (the dictatorship of the colonels), Anagnostaki criticised bourgeois indifference to situations of extreme violence (both psychological and physical). In this sense, indifference means conformism and passive support. Furthermore, I seek to demonstrate the ways in which this particular production was an act of resistance against the colonels' regime, and the pseudo ideological conflicts of its time.

Contextualising Reception: Writing about Theatre and National Identity

Marilena Zaroulia (Royal Holloway)

In recent years, theatre studies has seen an intensifying interest in the link between theatre and notions of the nation and national identity. This article proposes a methodology for writing about theatre and national identity, focusing on the reception

of non-national, foreign texts in other nations' theatre stages. Starting from four selected paradigms from my doctoral research on the reception of post-1956 English drama in Athens during the last quarter of the twentieth century, I emphasise the significance of contextualising reception for addressing questions about national identity. A comprehensive analysis of the historical moment in which a production takes place unveils 'hidden elements' in the image of the nation, recognising the theatre's influential role in resisting to hegemonic conceptions of the nation and national identity.

The Literary Artist and Social Cohesion in a Multi-Lingual Setting: A Study of Ola Rotimi's *If... A Tragedy of the Ruled* and *Hopes of the Living Dead*

Busuyi Mekusi (Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria)

No doubt, language forms one of the viable means of human communication, which in turn enhances social cohesion most especially in a multi-lingual setting. Efforts are made in this paper to examine the functional description of language in its direct relevance to Nigerian society. The paper equally discusses the multi-lingual issue, focusing on Nigeria of Ola Rotimi's descriptions in *If...a Tragedy of the Ruled* and *Hopes of the Living Dead*, where polyglots are used to bridge the gap 'created' by linguistic multiplicity. Consequently, the paper submits that linguistic differences are amplified to establish a foundation for marginalization by the perfidious leaders whose inclination is to keep the unwary masses in perpetual subjugation. The paper concludes that active participation by all, achieved through the use of an interpreter for the benefits of the various linguistic groups in the texts and the audiences they elicit, is what is paramount in Rotimi's mind, a belief which has necessitated his sense of togetherness that pervades the two plays set against the discord of an exploitative selfish elite class.