

Editorial

This edition of *Platform* takes inspiration from the abundance of contemporary scholarly works that discuss space and place in relation to performance, as well as recent trends in British theatre making. In his seminal work on theatre semiotics, place and performance published in 1989, Marvin Carlson observes that:

the way an audience experiences and interprets a play, we now recognize, is by no means governed solely by what happens on the stage. The entire theatre, its audience arrangements, its other public spaces, its physical appearance, even its locations within a city, are all important elements of the process by which an audience makes meaning of its experience. (2)

Since the publication of Carlson's monograph, there has been a proliferation of academic studies that explore theatre and performance through the lens of cultural materialism and contemporary geographical thought, including *Theatre & The City* by Jen Harvie, and Elinor Fuchs and Una Chaudhuri's edited book *Land/Scape/Theatre*. Theatre and performance's relationship to site and space has also been debated at a variety of academic conferences: in 2009 Aberystwyth University's Theatre, Film and Television department staged the three-day event 'Living Landscapes', while a conference at King's College London in 2014 highlighted the importance of landscape and environment in dramatic productions in ancient Greece. Furthermore, over the past ten years there has been an upsurge in site-specific

ic performances in the UK, ranging from productions by *Punchdrunk*, *Theatre Delicatessen* and *You Me Bum Bum Train*, which revivify desolate urban edifices, to the National Theatre of Wales' open-air shows celebrating the region's rural landscapes.

The wide-ranging interest in how performance is shaped by landscape and environment is reflected in the broad scope of the five articles in this edition, which pose diverse and original questions about the importance of where performance happens. In her photo essay, Cara Berger engages with place on the level of feeling and sensation. 'An Atmosphere of Entropy' is a reflection on moving through the urban landscape of Budapest, a "palimpsestic city" that is marked by the remnants of multiple collapsed political systems. As she searches the streets for a feeling of entropy, Berger's reading of Gernot Böhme's theory of atmospheres leads her to muse on the characteristics of an entropic atmosphere, the sense of possibility such an atmosphere might generate, and what this in turn might reveal about performance.

Next, Canan Salih's article 'Interrogating Bengali Youth's Performances of Place Through Emplacement and Mobility' documents her practice as research project *A Disgraceful Waste of Space* (2009). Salih compares the analogous ways two separate groups of young people of Bengali background in east London perform their diasporic identities through their use of public spaces. Drawing on a wide range of contemporary scholarship the essay reflects on the ways in which place is made and performed and the

significance of gender in spatial practices.

In a very different - but equally sited - example of practice-based research, Victoria Bianchi discusses her attempt to disrupt the androcentric space of an established heritage site through the intervention of feminist performance. 'The path to *CauseWay*' analyses Bianchi's site-specific work *CauseWay*, which was created for the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum and Cottage and told the neglected local narrative of two suffragettes who attempted to blow up the cottage in 1914. Through the theoretical intersection of performance studies, geography and heritage studies, this essay explores the complicated relationship between heritage, site, gender and performance.

Matthew Bent's contribution 'Aspects of landscape politics in *KA MOUNTAIN AND GUARDenia TERRACE: a story about a family and some people changing*' explores Robert Wilson's 1972 production at the Shiraz Arts Festival in the context of the Iranian land reforms of the 1960s, re-assessing the politics of landscape aesthetics in Wilson's theatre. Drawing on the work of cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove, Bent emphasises the significance of the lack of first hand sources on *KA MOUNTAIN*, and instead employs a wider historical perspective to analyse the performance and explore Wilson's use of site.

While the first two articles in this issue focus specifically on urban landscapes, we conclude this edition with an account of site-specific performance in a rural setting. In 'Trace' Elizabeth Bennett delineates her own personal experience of Landscape Theatre Company WildWork's

production *100: The Day Our World Changed*. Bennett's narration gives a unique and introspective description of the performance, as she traces the action from the harbour at Mevagissey, inland to the Lost Gardens of Heligan. The playful design of the paper evokes the topography of the Cornish landscape, and appropriately rounds out the issue's varied approach to the importance of place and geography in theatre and performance.

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James Rowson and Catherine Love, Editors

Works cited

Carlson, Marvin. *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture*. Ithica: Cornwell UP, 1989.