

Editorial

There is history only as long as people revolt, resist, act.
Total institutions are attempts to institute the end of history.¹

The idea about this issue's pivotal theme *Theatres of Resistance* stemmed from a genuine interest in theatre's ideological efficacy; can theatre effectively challenge and/or change social institutions? In contemporary capitalist societies politics have been demystified and as Baudrillard contends, "aesthetized in the spectacle."² Theatre, as a commodified institution itself, has become either a normative medium of capitalist propaganda, or a spectacular simulation of resistance. Have we reached the end of history? If contemporary capitalism is a totalitarian institution, is there any form of resistance left? In this issue we tried to compile articles that addressed the notion of resistance in order to explore the ways in which it can be achieved.

The fact that we received papers from around the globe interrogating issues about forms of resisting theatre (or theatres of resistance) in Argentina, New Zealand, Greece, Nigeria and the States, reverberates and fulfills the scope of our initial intention: to demonstrate the global aspects of a vibrating and challenging art that can prove motivating for political action, and to offer an insight into current debates on nation and identity, sexual politics, totalitarianism (in any form) and resistance. The selected papers shed light on various theatres of resistance against several forms of totalitarian institutions: military dictatorships, patriarchal society, (post-)colonial contexts, capitalism. Are the terms 'theatres of resistance' and 'political theatre' synonymous? Can theatre shake up the complacency of the audience and disrupt their habitual role as spectators/consumers?

In "Moving Targets: An 'Illogical' Theatre of Resistance in (Pre)Occupied Territory," Ryan Reynolds puts forward the question whether theatre of resistance is viable in a consumerist, postmodern society. In order to overcome capitalist logic which is no longer crystallized but constantly moving, insidiously infiltrating social structures, Reynolds proposes a specific strategy of theatre of resistance. His account of *The Last Days of Mankind*, a type of interactive street spectacle, is a fascinating example of this strategy, mainly resisting the stability and primacy of meaning, unveiling the audience's entrapment in the consumers' society.

The interactive and disruptive element is also evident in "Confusing Gender: Strategies for resisting objectification in the work of Split Britches" where resistance is of a sexual nature, involving the performer's body. Emily Underwood makes the case for a type of theatre that resists the objectification of the female body imposed by the spectator's gaze. The insightful analysis of the various strategies employed by Lois Weaver in *What Tammy Needs to Know*, suggests the potential of undermining the tantalising power of the audience's gaze and overcoming the circumvention of the lesbian performer's body.

Interactivity in the realm of performance and theatre as a means of criticising audience's complicity and urging for political action also permeates "Accusing and Engaging the Audience through Theatreform: Griselda Gambaro's *Information for Foreigners*." Selena Burns considers Argentinean playwright Griselda Gambaro's "experiential promenade" utilized in this particular piece where she dramatises the

¹ Bourdieu, P. and L. J. D Wacquant, *An invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity P, 1992) 102.

² Baudrillard, Jean, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena* (London & New York, 1993) 9.

human rights violation through torture that took place in Argentina during the early 1970s under military regime. The scope of such aesthetic choices is to stimulate both the emotional and critical awareness of the audience, confronting them with their complicity and individual/collective guilt. Overall, the paper raises thought provoking questions on the political efficacy of theatre, providing links to contemporary forms of ‘legalized’ violence and repression.

Philip Hager’s paper provides a geographical transition to the colonel’s dictatorship in 1970s Greece, exploring Greek playwright Lula Anagnostaki’s *Antonio or the Message*, and the political implications of its 1972 production in Athens. He attempts to show the ways in which theatre established a political alliance with audiences in order to undermine the military regime and challenge the social structures that produced it. This paper explores the role of theatre in the resistance to the pseudo-ideological conflicts of the Greek manifestation of the Cold War.

Remaining in the same geographical location but moving forward in time, the next paper provides a link between Greece and Britain. In “Contextualising Reception: Writing about Theatre and National Identity” Marilena Zaroulia raises questions on Greekness and discusses the notion of resistance against the hegemonic images of national identity, through the production of foreign plays. She produces a methodological model for the analysis of reception, and a theoretical outline of her stimulating work on post-1956 British drama in post-colonels’ Greek society.

Finally, in a different context, “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*” further explores the complexities of national identity in a multilingual framework. He probes how Nigerian playwright Ola Rotimi portrays multilingual diversity onstage, aspiring to bridge the gap between the language of the ex-colonizer and indigenous dialects, and to surmount the exploitation of linguistic diversity by Nigeria’s post-colonial corrupt leaders. He thus makes a case for a political agency and progress based on unity and solidarity among Nigerian people, which should not be halted by linguistic heterogeneity, but reinforced by cultural and linguistic syncretism.

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