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The IP and its Partners

Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

Institut für Film-, Theater- und empirische Kulturwissenschaft;
IPP „Performance and Media Studies“

Trinity College Dublin

School of Drama, Film and Music

Universität Wien

Institut für Theater-, Film- und Medienwissenschaft

King's College London

School of Arts & Humanities

Uniwersytet Łódźki

Katedra Dramatu i Teatru

The programme is designed to provide a forum for discussion where (doctoral) students can share their ideas and research projects among themselves and with experts from various fields. Intensive seminars and workshops constitute the core of the Summer School which will be framed by a wide range of supporting events. The aim of the IP's Summer School is to establish a tight network on both an academic as well as on a social level which will serve as fertile ground on which to continue one's own as well as joint academic efforts.

The Summer School offers a diverse mixture of

- Seminars & Workshops
- Evening Lectures
- Excursions
- Presentation Panels & Working Groups

Concepts of Holiness Performing Belief: The Religious as Critical Practice

From the perspective of the late 20th century, religion in Europe could still be conceived as a waning entity: Religious practices had increasingly become invisible through their dissociation from religious institutions and by their banishment to the realm of the private. Simultaneously they seemed to have been succeeded by „the spirit of capitalism“ (Max Weber) or to have found their new place within this „spirit“, as in Walter Benjamin's claim that capitalism was not beyond religion, but a form of religion itself. However, the global events inaugurating the 21st century, such as the terror attacks on September 11, 2001 and the subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the near collapse of the capitalistic financial markets recently, have brought the Religious back into public discourse: While Philosophers such as Alain Badiou and Giorgio Agamben use the figure of Saint Paul in order to question the hegemony of Capitalism, the rhetoric of the former US-President George W. Bush employed an ideological discourse laden with religious metaphors, thus positioning the United States as „God's own country“ against the „axis of evil“.

Against this background, and according to Agamben's notion of religion not derived from religare but from relegere in a sense which points at the cautious hesitation, the re-reading, in the face of forms and formulas that are to be followed when the separation of the holy and the profane is to be respected, the three year IP Programme „Concepts of Holiness“ proposes an operational approach to the Religious that allows to revisit diverse concepts of holiness in a broader sense and to reevaluate the role of religion(s) in Theatre, Cultural Performance, and Media.

The IP is divided into three research units that are investigated at three subsequent Summer Schools. This year's program shall approach the concepts of faith and religion from a performative perspective: To what extent can religion become a critical practice?

International Summer School
10 - 22 July 2014
University of Mainz

Concepts of
Holiness
Performing Belief:
The Religious as Critical Practice

Seminars

The Nerve Bible: Between Psychosis, the Sacred and National Socialism

Michael Bachmann (Mainz) / Alan Read (London)

One of the most widely discussed texts in psychiatric literature, Daniel Paul Schreber’s *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken* (Memoirs of My Nervous Illness), first published in 1903, was written during the latter’s stay at Castle Sonnenstein, near Dresden, at the time a Royal Public Asylum for the mentally ill. Only a few decades later, that same site would be turned into an ‘NS-Tötungsanstalt’, an extermination center to carry out the National Socialist euthanasia program in what historian Raul Hilberg has called the “conceptual as well as technological and administrative prefiguration of the ‘Final Solution.’” When the euthanasia program was stopped in 1941, shortly before the death camps were set into operation, 15,000 people had already been gassed in Sonnenstein alone. Through a series of three case studies dealing with National Socialism, the seminar will discuss the relation between psychoanalytic concepts (such as trauma, psychosis, and working-through) on the one hand, and practices of sacralisation on the other: First, we will examine how Schreber shares with Fascism a moral crisis of the symbolic that, while hinting at “the theological dimension of political and social authority” (Eric Santner), interrupts the “performative magic” of investiture (i.e., of assuming one’s identity). Then we will turn to the film *Our Hitler* (1977) by German film and theatre director Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, who undertakes a highly problematical “work of mourning” to work through the history of Germany. While the first two case studies return us to the sometimes conflicting histories accumulating in “actual” sites, the third case study displaces a site and its traumatic history onto the stage: Hotel Modern’s *KAMP* (premiered 2007) rebuilds the extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau as a theatrical model through which 3000 puppets are being moved. Starting from the relationship between psychosis, the sacred, and National Socialism, we will move towards a broader discussion of issues such as site-specificity, “investments” in identity, and performance.

The Role of Theatre in Questioning Church and State

Steve Wilmer (Dublin) / Friedemann Kreuder (Mainz)

Religion remains a powerful force in society. When combined with nationalism, it can become empowering or dangerous depending on whether one is included in or excluded from normative practices. Many national governments such as Ireland, Israel and India were formed with religious orthodoxies as part of their founding tenets. Others such as Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union and North Korea developed their own ideologies that functioned effectively as religions. The theatre has been used both to support and to critique state religious practices from the Greeks to the present. In this

seminar we will consider the ways that theatrical performances have questioned the power of religious figures and religious beliefs, from Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Bound* and Sophocles’ *Antigone* to contemporary plays about child abuse and slave labour in Irish religious institutions like The Broken Talkers’ performance of *The Blue Boy*.

Topos of Everyman as an Aesthetic Device of Ideological and Religious Critical Practice in Modern Drama

Mariusz Bartosiak (Lodz) / Pavel Drábek (Hull)

Everyman, a moral play of Dutch origin has been very popular in 16th century. It has been almost immediately translated into English, Latin, German and many other languages. But, what is more important, it has several reinterpretations within a century, which served as a kind of dramatic argument in ideological and religious discussion of that age in Europe, especially in Germany. After three centuries, it has been revived by H. Hofmannsthal and its dramatic structure served as a point of reference for several ideologically infused dramas, as well revolutionary and political, as Christian and religious. Hence, topos of Everyman seems to form a kind of universal dramatic archetype of special rhetorical power that makes it a kind of aesthetic device serving for critical practices in different cultural and ideological contexts. The seminar will focus the history and origins of the topos of Everyman, its cognitive and dramatic structure, and the 20th century reinterpretations.

Oberammergauian Negotiations – The Passion Play as a Religious Trade Mark

Julia Stenzel (Mainz) / Jan Mohr (Munic)

First performed in 1662, the Oberammergau Passion Play was one of numerous similar events linked to local traditions and religious practice. Today it is a public event of global relevance. The seminar focuses on how the Oberammergau play evolved as a generator of various transnational and transcultural ad-hoc-communities (Warstat). In looking at the constellations of the play, its functions, and the respective audiences, the seminar also proposes a broader historical perspective: The evolution of the play text and its performances shouldn’t be thought of as pending on a telos or intended by a (collective) subject. The revisions of the text are reactions on critical voices pointing at either theological or political matters and/or on the expectations of its respective audiences. Thus, change is emerging out of shifts in the constellation constituted by religion, tradition, and community. In the seminar, we will discuss the pictorial record and different versions of the play text as well as (historical and actual) reviews since the enormous transformations of the performances and their function in mid 19th century.

Workshops

The Comic Edge

Eric Weitz (Dublin)

This workshop will interweave studio exercises and theoretical engagement to explore how comic practice acquires and deploys a political edge. The humour transaction always seeks a validation of prejudice, which, in most cases, provides the affective charge for full-bodied laughter. It is by nature conservative, trading on biases already held by the laughers – there are, however, strategies of unsettling this polarity, which will inform the main thrust of the workshop. To analyse all the vectors of influence at the site of any comic utterance, one must look at all those involved – who’s joking? who’s listening? at whose expense is the joke being made? – as well as the sociocultural context, joking technique and joking material. We will look both at classic theorists and contemporary humour scholars and submit some of these lines of thought to practical exploration. We will delve into existing dramatic texts as well as carrying out a series of practical ‘experiments’.

Everyman as Critical Device

Dariusz Lesnikowski (Lodz)

This workshop provides an opportunity to extend understanding of the ‘morality play’ aesthetics as a critical device through practical exercises and their critical application. A series of practical classes is to use methods of work and preparation of performances in the politically and socially involved alternative theatre. The aim of the exercises is to shape the universal space of the performance, deprived of scenography, the space which becomes meaningful due to the work with an object that is polysemic, to do some acting that opts for a model of reserved acting, non-realistic, being in contrast to psychological acting. The reference material will include the fragments of alternative and institutional theatre performances based on contemporary dramas which offer the audience a kind of moral guidance and use the exemplification of the topos of Everyman as an aesthetic device of ideological and religious critical practice.

Acolyte – Revolutionary – Ascetic: Carmelo Bene as a theatre artist

Gabriele C. Pfeiffer (Vienna)

How is it possible to reconcile the figures of the acolyte, the revolutionary and the ascetic in theatrical activity? The radical theatre artist Carmelo Bene (1937-2002) provides – and himself is – a response to the extent that he contextualizes this question in theory and practice, consistently and uncompromisingly, with the help of great minds, such as Foucault, Lacan, Schopenhauer, Kleist, Klossowski and Poe, and uses the result for his own benefit, his language. Bene did not only just stir the pot with his lifelong opus – as theatre artist, filmmaker, writer, scandalous and ascetic man as well as enfant terrible – rather and above all he enrolled in the self-chosen genealogy of “Diderot-Wilde-Meyerhold-Artaud-Bene”. He learned from catholic priests, had ‘destroyed the theatre to save it’, embraced fools and saints equally, lived like a monk and left his legacy as echo (eco, CB). During this seminar we will follow Carmelo Bene throughout his (de)constructions, his mise en scène, his criticizing actions (Deleuze) both on stage as well as in film and, in particular, as voice artist (phoné, CB). His practical actions, coined by religion and deeply rooted in his native Southern Italy, form an integral part of this process.

Other Activities

- **Evening Lectures:** applied interdisciplinary lecture series conceived and given by the international IP faculty
- **Presentation Panels:** doctoral students present and discuss their current research and discuss it with the international faculty
- **Cultural programme**