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Performing European Memories: Trauma Ethic Politics. By Milija Gluhovic. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 322, \$85.50, hardcover, 5 illustrations.

Reviewed by **Caoimhe Mader McGuinness, Queen Mary, University of London**

Milija Gluhovic's *Performing European Memories: Trauma, Ethic, Politics* is a thorough exploration of the relationship between traumatic European histories and theatre. Gluhovic's central project is to address the work of witnessing and the possibilities of mourning that certain performances permit in order to open up spaces for unresolved or unaddressed grief within a pan-European context. The book addresses national and cultural trauma via an extremely large and diverse set of theories, ranging from the psychoanalytical to the historical and philosophical. These theories are applied to a heterogeneous set of texts as the book moves easily between close biographical and textual analyses of Heiner Müller and Harold Pinter; a deep engagement with Tadeusz Kantor's later performances; and a series of examples from cinema and video art.

Gluhovic is careful to specify that his project is by no means comprehensive, reminding us repeatedly that establishing a singular European memory is both impossible and dangerous. The book takes an important detour via Haiti in an exploration of Müller's *The Task*, emphasizing the invisibility of the colonial enterprise in European discourses on trauma. However, the geographical heart of the book mostly remains located on the Central and Eastern side of the continent, as the relevant histories revolve around Soviet occupation, the Holocaust, and the end of the Eastern Socialist states.

Gluhovic's analysis of complicated and contested histories in both Müller and Kantor's theatre provide a deeper understanding of the influence of both artists' national histories on their respective works. Through a close biographical approach, he teases out the potential meanings of their art. In the case of Müller, the suicide of the dramatist's wife provides a means for Gluhovic to explore exploring the Allied bombings of Germany at the end of World War II. While investigating the later plays of Kantor's *Theatre of Death*, Gluhovic engages with difficulties and contradictions of Polish history. The Katyn massacre, a subject that remained taboo during the entire socialist pe-

riod in Poland, is discussed via Kantor's *mise en scène* of *Let the Artists Die*. The juxtaposition of Kantor's own memories with great figures of the Polish past provide, in Gluhovic's opinion, a means for collective history to intrude on personal biography. This in turn presents a manner of addressing the forbidden past through an act of spectatorial witnessing.

Given the recurrence of the Holocaust within the field of memory studies as the exemplary symbolic event of Europe's historical trauma, the book's focus on this particular theme is hardly surprising. Certainly, the book's strongest point is its comprehensive engagement with a vast set of conflicting ideas regarding the effect and representation of Holocaust memories. I found the discussion of postmemory in chapter four particularly compelling in its ambivalent approach to testimony and collective memory. Postmemory refers here to a particular way of inhabiting a traumatic historic event which Gluhovic discusses via Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes* and Artur Zmijewski's *80064*. It is not the product of first-hand recollection or even familial transmission, but a type of projection encouraged through specific forms of memorializing. While looking at the way in which artworks focus on Holocaust testimonies and their intergenerational transmission, Gluhovic warns, via historian Dominick LaCapra, that it is essential to avoid "negative sublimity." He argues that certain cultural engagements with the Holocaust, such as Claude Lanzmann's *Shoa* or various Holocaust museums, run the risk of engulfing us in identification with, rather than establishing a more intersubjective relationship with, victims.

Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes* is a rich text through which to explore this subject matter. Analyzing both the play's content and its reception, Gluhovic convincingly argues for the incorporation of Holocaust memories as the primary reference points for nondescript sites of European violence. He also makes provocative use of theories of BDSM's eroticization of fascism. The obsession of the play's female character, Rebecca, with a nondescript genocidal event—which critics identify time and time again with the Holocaust—at first seems like a typical case of over-identification with victim narratives. But Gluhovic complicates this reading by considering sexual elements at work. Gluhovic asserts, via Leo Bersani, Elizabeth Freeman and Laura Frost, that this eroticization of historical trauma through fantasy permits a more complex means of reflecting on postmemory, in

which there is both ethical repudiation of as well as fascination with this type of violence. This move allows us to think about the ways historical identification in the form of sexual play might offer a more conscious manner of working through collective memories in place of the constant traumatization that accompanies those forms of remembrance that encourage immersive experiences through identification.

An example of the latter, problematic approach is Zmijewski's *80064*, in which the artist directly seeks to uncover the "authentic" memory of Jozef Tarnawa, an Auschwitz survivor, by filming the tattooing of his previously erased prisoner number. For Gluhovic the work becomes unethical as a consequence of its uncritical desire to reproduce traumatic experience instead of examining a traumatic history. The chapter as a whole offers productive reflections on the usefulness of spectating represented trauma considering how such spectatorship inflects our ethical relationships with the past and the present.

The book overall is dense and thoroughly researched, which at times plays slightly against its favor. Although I found the range of trauma theory and the biographical detail fascinating, I sometimes wanted these to be applied more fully to staged performances, which sometimes disappear in the sheer detail and multiplicity of the theoretical material. However, *Performing European Memories* is a sensitive and complex account of how art can play with our collective memories, informing the ways we live together.

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