Writing and reWriting national theatre histories

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Reading List


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Challenging Ideological Presumptions of national discourses

- **Geography**
  - What are the geographical boundaries of the nation?
  - How important is the capital as opposed to the regions in the history of the nation?
  - Who qualifies as a national artist? (by birth? by residence?)
  - How important is domestic as opposed to imported and/or translated work?
- **Language**
  - Is language more important than geography for decided who/what to include?
  - What place does theatre in minority languages have?
  - In countries with two or more national languages, should they be written as separate histories?

- **Ethnicity**
  - Which ethnic groups to include?
Aesthetics

- Whether to concentrate on dramatic literature or performance or include...

- Whether to include different forms such as dance, opera, puppetry

- Whether to include amateur performances? (professional vs. amateur)

- Importance of religious or other ideological theatre?

- What is the role of marginalized groups, including women?

- Whether to reinforce a canon of national dramatic literature?

- Whether to emphasize the narrative of national awakening?
Case Study #1

Students were broken into four groups and challenged with the task of writing a national theatre history. The following projects were proposed:

- Eastern Bloc History - theatre from the fall of the USSR and former Soviet dominions
- North American Amateur Wiki - an internet space available for companies/projects to upload material
- German-Austrian History - language as a unifying factor or has it lead to conflation?
- Swiss Theatre - considering socio-geographic borders
Case Study #2

Film by Samuel Beckett
Students were broken up into groups and worked on how best to approach and re-tell the history of *Film*. This work was influenced by Hansen’s article on vernacular modernism.

Discussions highlighted the following thoughts:

- artefact vs. artifact
- how do we narrate film history through a specific case study?
Questions

- How can we define National Theatre?
- Does every nation have a National Theatre?
- Who writes National Theatre histories?
- What are the differences between historicism and historical materialism?