

29th Annual CDE Conference, Augsburg, 21–24 May 2020

The German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English (CDE) is pleased to announce its 29th Annual Conference (21–24 May 2020). It is organized by the Chair of English Literature at the University of Augsburg and will be held as a residential conference at 'Haus Sankt Ulrich' in Augsburg.

Critical Theatre Ecologies

The task of the environmental humanities is to investigate “the productive conceptual tension between humans’ agency as a species and the inequalities that shape and constrain the agencies of different kinds of humans, on one hand, and between human and nonhuman forms of agency, on the other” (Heise 2017: 6). Drama and the theatre, in view of their generic emphasis on physical and verbal action (even in their post-dramatic radicalizations), seem predestined to carry out aesthetic reflections on such tensions. However, ecocritical scholars frequently seem to focus their efforts on narrative genres and “environmental narratives” rather than on performances of ecological change. One possible explanation is the fact that ecological developments usually pan out in temporal and spatial dimensions that far exceed those of the medium of representation (see Clark 2015: 175) and that the slow pace and global extension of ecological change may seem to be particularly at odds with the dramatic form. Nevertheless, in recent years a plethora of new plays and performances that address in various ways ecological questions such as climate change and related phenomena of human-made environmental disaster has hit the stages in the UK and elsewhere. This raises the question of what aesthetic and philosophical consequences the awareness of ecological crisis and a redefinition of the anthropological position of humans in nature must have on the dramatic form and on practices of performance. In what way, if at all, can the theatre effect behavioural changes in its audiences and what can its contributions to the global debate on ecological responsibility be, as this debate has entered the social and political mainstream? This conference wants to address such questions in the light of a critical ecology of drama and theatre and seeks to trace the effects of global challenges on playwriting and performance alike. The conference invites reflection on liveable and inclusive environmental futures and on how the theatre can be productive in such reflection without presupposing trivialised virtues and potencies.

We invite proposals for papers in English of 20 minutes’ length – as well as alternative formats in line with the philosophy of the CDE and its intention to promote research and teaching in the area of recent and contemporary theatre and drama in English. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- *Eco-Drama/Theatre*: Drama and theatre studies within the field of environmental humanities; critical reflection of theatre and/as ecology; self-reflexive perspectives on nature and environment beyond the phantasm of totality; the precarious balance of universal interconnectedness, difference and contingency.
- *Eco-Spectators*: What are the theatre’s ecological responsibilities towards spectators? How are affects, emotions and cognition involved in the representation of ecological issues in drama and theatre?
- *Eco-Spaces*: Theatre spaces as ecological spaces.
- *Eco-Aesthetics*: Theatre aesthetics and its ecological potential; the difficulty/impossibility of representing the spatial and temporal dimensions of ‘ecological deep time’ and the theatre’s aesthetic re-

actions to these difficulties; questions of genre and its effects: does ecological drama and theatre form a genre of its own or is it part of other, already existing genres? Which chances and limitations do genre conventions represent for an aesthetics of theatre ecology?

- *Eco-Ethics*: Transnationalism and cosmopolitanism as ecological and ethical questions; stage responses/responsibilities to globalised ecologies; theatre and ecology as counter-discourses to neoliberal utilitarianism and counter-reactions to the “Capitalocene” (Jason W. Moore).
- *Eco-Networks*: Theatre, ecology and questions of intersectionality: how are questions of gender and/or race inequality connected to theatrical ecologies?
- *Eco-Anthropology*: Theatre and the ecological ‘real’: the planetary outlook of text and performance in the Anthropocene.

In accordance with CDE’s constitutional policy, papers should deal exclusively with contemporary (i.e. post-1989) theatre and drama in English.

Abstracts: Abstracts (300 words) for papers proposed (20 minutes maximum delivery time) should be accompanied by a short biographical note, plus full address and institutional affiliation.

Deadline: 1 November 2019

Send to: Martin Middeke (martin.middeke@philhist.uni-augsburg.de) and Martin Riedelsheimer (martin.riedelsheimer@philhist.uni-augsburg.de)

Emerging Scholars: CDE encourages contributions by emerging scholars. Scholars who work on a PhD in the field of contemporary theatre and drama (even if the PhD topic is not related to the conference topic) may apply to the CDE PhD Forum, which will take place on 21 May at the conference venue (for further information please see <http://contemporarydrama.de/phd-forum/>).

NB: Only paid-up members are eligible to give papers at CDE conferences. Membership subscriptions may be taken out or renewed during the conference. For details, please contact CDE’s treasurer Martin Riedelsheimer (martin.riedelsheimer@philhist.uni-augsburg.de).