Devised theatre, the dominant trend in the independent Greek scene for more than a decade now, uses personal biographies and everyday experiences, cinema scenarios, novels, classical plays, as well as archives and documents of every sort as its starting point. The present paper focuses on the Blitz Theatre Group as emblematic of the “devised turn” in the Greek independent theatre scene. The group was formed in October 2004 by Angeliki Papoulia, Christos Passalis, and Giorgos Valais in Athens. Since their first work, *Motherland* (2006), Blitz have been constantly engaged with hybrid modes of narration which blur the boundaries between dialectical forms and monologues, literary sources and documentary materials. More specifically, the present paper analyzes the group’s latest productions, *Cinemascope* (2010) and *Late Night* (2012), because they exemplify the Blitz dramaturgy of Time.

Devised theatre, the dominant trend in the independent Greek scene for more than a decade now, uses personal biographies and everyday experiences, cinema scenarios, novels, classical plays, as well as archives and documents of every sort as its starting point. Situated on the borderlines between the visual and performing arts, devised theatre practices allow theatre companies to employ improvisation and open forms which both extend and subvert the conventions of drama while, simultaneously, renegotiating the relationship between the on-stage event and the audience. Appropriating art and cinematographic principles such as collage and montage, devised theatre develops multiple modes of perception in which the spectator “can determine independently his own standpoint” (van Kerkhoven 11), differentiating between “looking at something” and “walking in something,” observing and being immersed, being alone or being together. According to the Belgian dramaturge Marianne van Kerkhoven, the dramaturgy which emerges from this situation is a “dramaturgy of perceiving” or a “dramaturgy of the spectator” (11). Historically, the genre is part of a broader postdramatic theatre which transcends the Hegelian definition of drama in which the action is the product of the protagonists’ conflicts, interests, or emotions and whose dénouement either reinstates a traditional situation or imposes a new order on things.
The present paper will focus on the Blitz Theatre Group as emblematic of this “devised turn” in the Greek independent theatre scene. The group was formed in October 2004 by Angeliki Papoulia, Christos Passalis, and Giorgos Valais in Athens. According to their manifesto, it was founded on the following fundamental principles:

Theatre is a field where people meet each other and exchange ideas in the most essential way, not a field for virtuosity and ready-made truths. There is a need for answers to what society asks from art today and what theatrical structures stand for at the dawn of the twenty-first century. All members are equal throughout the conception, writing, direction, and dramaturgy process, everything is under doubt, nothing must be taken for granted, neither in theatre nor in life.1

Since their first work, *Motherland* (2006), Blitz have been constantly engaged with hybrid modes of narration which blur the boundaries between dialectical forms and monologues, literary sources and documentary materials. Their crossing of times and materials could be summarized as “an art of unfolding,” which, for Tim Etchells, co-founder and director of the influential Sheffield-based company, Forced Entertainment, is closer to the visual arts or to a musical composition than it might have been to drama. For Etchells, performance is

less of a narrative structure than an art-form based on the dynamic deployment of pictorial and non-pictorial elements across the surface of the stage, building layers, contrasts, echoes, repetitions over duration, or simply: the structured unfolding of text, action and image over time, or more simply: doing time. Pure dramaturgy. Making shape out of seconds. (Etchells 76)

What Blitz are searching to install on stage by defeating any linear and progressive construction of history is exactly this awareness of Time. Time could be considered their main dramaturgical device; they are making time out of displaced narratives, latent images, fictional memories, gestures, or pure physical presence—this is a theatre that almost touches upon real life.

More specifically, the present paper will focus on the group’s latest productions, *Cinemascope* and *Late Night*, because they exemplify the Blitz dramaturgy of Time. Both are merely linked to a catastrophic event which has taken place or will take place in the world; to something that happened or might happen. Both works unfold actions over time, taking the end of the world and the idea of the Apocalypse as their compositional framework while imposing a rather conventional position on the audience. The spectators are thus moved from the position of bodily engagement associated with some of Blitz earlier works, such as *Katerini* (Bios, 2009), to a disembodied immersion associated with the frontal stage: in both *Cinemascope* and *Late Night* the audience are engaged with the stage action virtually, but not physically, since they are seated in rows and looking at the stage. What differentiates these two most recent works is what they

1. More on their works here: http://www.theblitz.gr/
are looking at exactly: while in *Late Night* they are in a regular theatre space, in *Cinemascope* the spectators are looking beyond the fourth wall, out onto the pedestrian street running alongside the theatre and the facade of the building across the street.

**A Cine-Doc About the End of the World**

*Cinemascope* is a theatrical “documentary” in the borderlands between cinema, theatre, and a sound installation. Premiered in June 2010 at Bios as part of the Athens Festival, the performance begins with an announcement telling the audience gathered in the foyer to put on their headphones. The first voice to reach their ears is that of a foreign correspondent reporting from “the centre of frozen Stockholm”; shortly afterwards, the journalist will reveal that she is actually standing outside the theatre on the white line separating the traffic going up and down Peiraios Street. There are nine days left until the end of the world and the citizenry, she informs us, are responding apathetically to the constant stream of dramatic government announcements.

Inside the theatre, the Narrator will inform us a little later on that “the use of headphones is compulsory and any attempt to remove them will be severely punished. . . . The plot seems simplistic, as though lacking poetic inspiration. We think film could convey the tension of these days more successfully. Unfortunately, theatre will always be fifty years behind the other arts.”

A few minutes after the prologue in the foyer, the audience find themselves
sitting in the dark performing space, invisible witnesses to the events set to unfold behind the glass wall on Salamina Street, a pedestrian-only street. Apart from the ground floor of the opposite building, where we see a telephone operator at work, and a second interior space, implied by the female voice we hear in a call box but never made visible, Cinemascope takes place within a fixed frame—a monoplane, if you prefer the cinematic term—demarcated by the theatre wall. In other words, the action takes place in a non-place, as Marc Augé (1992) terms urban spaces in which we co-exist but do not co-inhabit, given that the speed at which we are used to moving through it prevents encounters with the Other.

The performance was partly inspired by a one-act play without words: The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other by Peter Handke. First performed in 1992, the play has four hundred and fifty characters (firemen, hikers, mythical and operatic figures, cyclists, etc.) who arrive in a square and quickly disappear. The text contains no spoken words, only extensive stage directions. Its concept sprang from a few wistful hours of observation on a day in the life of an unspecified town square—while it is never made clear in what city, or even in what country, the play is taking place, the space is nevertheless the only element that frames the play and consequently its only protagonist. The play can be read as a critique of the very conventions of the theatre, as a projection of a dystopian here and now, but also as a description of the stage as an “open square in bright light” (Nordmann and Wickert 40).

The narrative of Handke’s play is articulated around micro-narratives; that is micro-units comprised of actions which are not integrated into a unified story with a beginning, middle, and end. There are no characters, only various Types who enter the frame with the rapidity of a drawing underlining Handke’s strong links with the visual arts.²

They don’t stop in the square either as they fan out in all directions, disappearing, reappearing, each for himself and also part of the game in his “warm up,” chimera-like, changing shapes and movements abruptly, on and on: from a standing jump, face unmoved, instant transformations into running like a rabbit, knocking dirt off shoes, spreading arms, shielding eyes, walking with a cane, walking softly, taking off a hat, combing one’s hair, drawing a knife, shadow-boxing, looking over the shoulder, opening an umbrella, sleepwalking, falling to the ground, spitting, balancing along a line, stumbling, skipping, spinning once along the way, humming, moaning, punching one’s head and face with the fist, tying one’s shoelaces, rolling briefly on the floor, writing in the air, all this topsy-turvy, not followed through, just a first try. (Handke 84)

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² Handke’s strong visual vocation could be compared with other Austrian writers like Adalbert Stifter, an early-nineteenth-century writer, poet, and painter, who overcame his Romantic heritage by attempting to demystify nature through a detailed, transparent, empirical depiction of the material world or, more precisely, of “things,” such as natural forces, ecological catastrophes, unknown human beings, or cultures. On Stifter’s landscapes, see Eric Downing (1999) 229-41.
Each of the unconnected passers-by has a story: The play invites a presentation of these stories, but withholds the means for their representation: it yields only contiguity, distance, and proximity, a rhythmic placement of figures in time and space; it yields spatial and temporal rather than personal relations” (Nordmann and Wickert 40). **Cinemascope** follows Handke’s play in featuring Types rather than characters. Some walk along the pavement talking to themselves and occasionally to the “black hole” that is the audience; very rarely, they try to strike up conversations with one another. Most are characterized by an object they are carrying or by some quality, occupational or otherwise, rather than by a name: the Foreigner with an Umbrella, the Cyclist, the Psychiatrist, the Girl with the Obsessions, the Woman with the Dog. Only two individuals—the only ones given full names—are more fully fleshed out: Franz Schubert the Astrophysicist and the ambivalent, Mephistophelean Louis Cyphre, who delivers Speeches of “Consolation” foretelling of the creation of the New City, a future Capital of our desires.

The juxtaposition of various Types reminds us of Blitz’s particular fondness for lists: of twentieth century dates in *Guns, Guns, Guns!* (2009) and of names, ideas, and objects in *Galaxy* (2011). The reason seems clear. As Umberto Eco points out, the list is a form that remains amenable to the infinite, broadens the scope of our vision, and discards any logical organization of time (15-18). Every Blitz story comprises a fragment of a whole and, simultaneously, subverts and expands the dramatic conventions.

In **Cinemascope**, the list is replaced by a numerical sequence as we count down together the nine days that remain until the end of the world. Continuity
is provided by the voice of the Narrator, who also bears witness to everything that has happened. We might say the Narrator presides over the game as an observer *ex machina* who sometimes describes the passage of days in detached tones and sometimes intervenes in the action by monitoring the emotional responses of the various Types—the scientist, Franz Schubert, for example, or solitary Elina. By revealing the underlying theatre mechanisms, the Narrator’s interventions mediatise the concrete, immediate experience of the *here and now*. *Cinemascope* revolves around the tension between the concrete, tangible “reality” inside the spectators’ frame and the imaginative outside world where the catastrophe takes place.

**A “Crystalline” Structure of Time**

The incorporation of the random and the unexpected in the dramaturgy of *Cinemascope* underlines this tension between the real and the imaginary. In a way, the interactive nature of the on-stage event has shifted from the relationship between performer and spectator to that between the performer and the passer-by who is unwittingly playing a role in this “social game.” These are “street incidents” that function as ruptures between the present and the imaginary on-stage time in which the earphone-wearing spectators are immersed. What we experience is what Gilles Deleuze defines, in Bergson’s terms, as a “crystalline structure” of time where the virtual and the actual, the physical and the mental, the real and the imaginary, the present and the past appear as two sides of the same image:

> What constitutes the crystal-image is the most fundamental operation of time: since the past is constituted not after the present that it was but at the same time, time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past, which differ from each other in nature, or, in what amounts to the same thing, it has to split the present in two heterogeneous directions, one of which is launched towards the future while the other falls into the past. Time has to split at the same time as it sets itself out or unrolls itself: it splits in two dissymmetrical jets, one of which makes all the present pass on, while the other preserves all the past. Time consists of this split, and it is this, it is time, that we see in the crystal. (Deleuze 81)

The “crystalline” nature of *Cinemascope* derives from this same temporal distension which allows for the coexistence of different temporalities: the present time of the unaware passers-by and aware spectators, the past/fictional time of the performers, and the undefined, time-once-removed in which the Narrator acts. As such, the passing of the days also serves an organizational function as a sort of hand-made theatrical montage in lieu of filmic time, which simultaneously segments and disjoints the theatrical space-time. “The spectator,” Hans-Thies Lehmann notes in reference to the postdramatic practice of “on-stage montage,” “has the impression of moving from take to take, just like in a film”; as a result, the perception of the theatrical event can be compared with that of a film (Lehmann 245).
A Participatory Viewing

The mediated perception of the performance through the compulsory use of headphones also serves an organizational role; it is a practice that has been adopted in various guises by devised and postdramatic theatre in general. In Rimini Protocoll’s *Sonde Hannover* (2002), for example, the spectators sat on the tenth floor of a skyscraper and observed the activities of four performers in a central Hanover square through binoculars as they were immersed, through their headphones, in a sound environment consisting of pre-recorded interviews with political analysts alternating with fantastic narratives and the conversations of passers-by.³

Blitz’s use of headphones is a particularly interesting dramaturgical device. On the one hand, it redefines the terms of “participatory viewing”; on the other hand, it expands the boundaries of devised dramaturgy beyond its often raw realism, introducing a Brechtian sense of the uncanny within the familiar, everyday urban space in which the performance takes place.

Additionally, the multilayered soundscape allows for the creation of “close-ups,” which expand space. As Walter Benjamin remarks in his seminal essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”:

> By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action. (Benjamin 42)

According to Benjamin, this reality that opens consciously to the camera—a different reality from that which opens unconsciously to the naked eye—is one of the major dissimilarities between the artistic performances of stage and cinema actors. The way Blitz use microphones blurs Benjamin’s distinction between theatre and cinema; they function as a kind of virtual camera, inviting the spectator to focus on specific micro-actions happening at the edge as well as in the centre of the frame, or in the background. At the same time, the sound environment creates a parallel space-time by engaging hearing independently of, but in a manner related to, vision: what we see coexists with, but is separate from, what we hear; put otherwise, *we do not hear what we see* and *we do not see what we hear* (for instance, explosions, panic scenes, shots). The use of headphones, therefore, engages the imagination and bolsters the spectator’s ability to perceive what is happening not only within, but also outside the frame: it strengthens what phenomenology terms our “peripheral perception”: everything taking place in and around Salamina Street makes its presence felt in the viewer’s fields of vision and hearing, imposing a singular mode of viewing which is both individual and public.

Rearticulating on-stage time and space to render tangible the sense of the

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³ On Rimini Protokoll’s public projects see Matzke (104-01).
uncanny through these new viewing conditions, Blitz identify the urban condition with the contemporary condition of alienation. It is not the façade of reality on which this “theatre of the street” sets its sights; rather, it is the potential it provides for condensing the tragedy of life within a dismembered city. This is no programmatically-motivated rift from the dominant dramatic text; it is an attempt at extending dramaturgy through the appropriation of non-theatrical places and practices.

*Cinemascope* is deliberately not included in the tradition of site-specific installations in which it is the city square itself that provides the pretext for articulating a critique of the mechanisms in use for monitoring and surveying public space. Here, the cinematic viewing condition is rooted not in the specific characteristics of the particular pedestrian street but in a general situation: the End of the World as this is experienced by the citizens of an actual urban centre somewhere in Europe. The lighting of the exterior space could not, in any case, be more dramatic, given that it always accords with the psychological state of the figures entering the “shot.” The pretext for our *flânerie* through the city is the need to record symptoms of the contemporary urban condition brought into being by the explosion of the traditional, historically constructed city. Although less emphatically than in the company’s site-specific performance *Katerini* (2009), the spatial condition of *Cinemascope* interrelates with its subjects.

While the work of the Rimini Protocoll can be categorized as critical realism, Blitz adhere to what might be termed a neo-naturalistic practice. They invite the spectators behind the “fourth wall” to share in personal dilemmas and commonplace stories with a view to deciphering their innate, conflicting elements together. Blitz are not interested in a typology of social problems, but in a typology of inner states as these are brought into being on the fringes of a strictly demarcated urban zone. This singular hyper-realism does not, of course, imply a lack of tension or a simplification of the perception process. However, prevalent conditions here include *implosion*, a risk identified by the French anthropologist Marc Augé as being interwoven into the reality of today’s cities, along with processes of “de-personalization,” “uniformization,” “isolation,” and “solitude.” In Physics, “implosion” denotes the internal collapse of a system through absorption and neutralization rather than an explosion of its dynamic components (Augé, *Pour une Anthropologie des Mondes Contemporains* 164).

I would say it is this hyper-realistic approach to the everyday that allows the fantastic to infiltrate the familiar. In Blitz’s extended dramaturgy, the fantastic is

4. According to the French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre, the city historically constructed “is no longer lived and is no longer understood practically. It is only an object of cultural consumption for tourists, for an estheticism, avid for spectacles and the picturesque. . . . Yet, the urban remains in a state of dispersed and alienated actuality. . . .” (Lefebvre 148).

5. The first one who introduced the term of “implosion” into the analysis of the urban landscape was Lewis Mumford.
brought into being organically through the fragmentary reality of a particular urban “space,” conferring a sense of the uncanny which Freud transposes onto every fiction. The non-place Blitz have chosen as their field of action in Cinemaskope is dominated by the same idée fixe that “the concept of progress is based on the concept of destruction,” the same worrying certainty that that is the way things are heading from now on (Benjamin 1974). Ultimately, malleable—and hence amenable to metamorphosis—as it is, the Salamina pedestrian street serves as an allegory for human existence in the contemporary urban environment; which is to say it is neither sociological nor psychological but ontological in nature.

A Night Over Europe

_Late Night_ premiered at the Onassis Cultural Center on October 31, 2012 and has been engaged in a whirlwind tour of international festivals and theatres ever since. The performance takes place in the early hours of the day in a ruined dance hall. It could be a space somewhere in Europe after a war or nuclear catastrophe. The stage landscape is ordinary yet unfamiliar, as it is covered in detritus and dust, which imposes a feeling of strangeness on the space. The only things left intact are some battered chairs, an old television set showing scenes from films by Jean Luc Godard, Andrei Tarkovsky, Jean Renoir, and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, which we often hear as noise but never see, and a bar equipped with water and glasses—everyday objects that recall peaceful times and imbue this semi-public space with a strange sense of the private.
Six performers are staring at us as we enter the theatre. No one knows when and why they have ended up there, where they came from, and where they are going to; there is no before and after. They will keep their real names throughout the performance: Sophia (Kokkali), Fidel (Talaboukas), Maria (Filini), Angeliki (Papoulia), Christos (Passalis), and Giorgos (Valais). They do not really speak to each other, but communicate physically through their dance—dance is the performers’ only meaningful gesture. The soundtrack includes famous waltzes that undermine the dramatic atmosphere: Waltz no. 2 by Dimitri Shostakovich and Aram Khachaturian’s Waltz from his Masquerade Suite of 1944. They dance in pairs in an ever-accelerating, repetitive circular movement that recalls the vertiginous movement of a spiral. The couples seem to be trapped in an absurd, desperate, endless competition; they seem driven by outside forces. They give the impression that they started before the spectators enter and will continue—perhaps endlessly—after our departure; the dance hall gives the impression of being their only refuge, their only “home.” Their dancing is interrupted by various peripheral micro-actions as they lip-synch to songs, drink, sit in the old-fashioned chairs which stand facing the audience at the back of the stage, talk about their wishes and secret dreams, comment on other performers’ thoughts, or dully perform magic tricks verging on the naive and the ridiculous. These insignificant micro-gestures, the only things occurring centre-stage, counteract the couples’ dramatic spiralling movement. From time to time, they stop dancing and talk into the microphone, struggling to recall a journey through
Europe, a lost love, some peaceful moments, or a European war that may still be ongoing.

Following the days of an imaginary personal and collective journal, the fragmented stories we hear in the microphones function as close-ups which, as in Cimmascope, focus the audience’s attention on specific images without allowing them to construct the whole story of a life. These micro-narrations interrupt the spiral movement of the waltz and impose a different order on the space, the performers often form queues, as though waiting in line one behind the other, before joining the spiralling dance again. Music on fast forward or rewind, chunks of concrete falling from the ceiling, and blackouts provide other momentary interruptions which accentuate both the uncanniness of the spatial condition and the degenerating materiality of the dance hall itself, where everything continues to fall apart. The sense of progressive deformation is intensified by the bodies as they intermittently fall headlong, their movements growing less and less harmonious, while their mounting mental and physical exhaustion makes it harder and harder to finish a story and, eventually, even a sentence; sentences and thoughts often remain suspended in the air, signifying the end of communication or the impossibility of recalling a memory through words. It is a process of deformation that leaves the stage drenched in a sense of existential angst.

In the end, though, as a statement of content, too, the whirling dancing remains the only unifying element of Late Night’s fragmented narrative structure in which personal stories intersect with fact-based events and imagined worlds:

The day the zoo was bombed, all the animals escaped into the city. We chased them. We were chasing giraffes which knocked their heads against the traffic lights. It was a game for us. That’s what I remember from those days ~ In those days, you could read on the walls in the centre of Amsterdam: THE OLD LIFE IS OVER,IDIOTS!

In those days, we’d break into hospitals and give ourselves morphine injections. We’d steal wheelchairs and race around Rosenthaler Platz ~ I am sitting on a wall ~ I am trying to see the fireworks launched over the canal ~ They are celebrating the fall of Novi Sad ~ I help you up ~ In those days, there were fireworks every night there ~ I am at Kollwitz Platz. It’s snowing. In those days, any notion of shame had disappeared.

Late Night dramaturgy breaks with linear narratives as it relies on cinematic techniques: pacing, montage, dissolves. The main source of inspiration is La Jetée (1962), Chris Marker’s cult ciné-roman. It is a quasi-science fiction film composed almost entirely of black-and-white still photographs edited together on 35mm film. The voice-over commentary is delivered in a neutral tone that recalls the authoritative voice-overs of historical documentaries. The narrator fills the narrative gaps, as do various diegetic background noises, while, in two instances, the film immerses us into the physical sound of the scene: the aircraft engines and announcements at Orly at the beginning and end of the film. La
Jetée is set in a subterranean post-World War III Paris. It is the story of a prisoner “marked by an image of his childhood” in pre-war times that revolves around a “violent scene” that occurred on the observation platform at Orly airport. The memory, whose significance only becomes clear much later, is of the horrified expression on a woman’s face as she watches a man crumple and fall. When the scientists decide to send the man back to the pre-war period in the hope that he could alter the course of history and prevent the nuclear catastrophe, the man is faced with real and imagined images from times of peace which are linked by the face of the woman that haunts his dreams and memories. As the voice-over comments: “Other images appear, merge, in that museum, which is perhaps that of his memory” (Marker 2008).

Archiving Memory

This highly personalized, virtual topography could be perceived as an archive with both factual and fictional fragments. Emerging, as Foucault says, out of fragments, regions, and levels, the archive, by definition, breaks “the thread of transcendental teleologies,” while depriving us of our continuities and an authoritative totality. “It is obvious,” writes Foucault, that “the archive of a society, a culture, or a civilization cannot be described exhaustively” and thus remains, by definition, incomplete (Foucault 30).

Just like Late Night, La Jetée could be perceived as a fragmentary portrait of twentieth century Europe, which, emerging through disparate stories relating to personal trajectories or to the history of European cities, demonstrates that facts are not the opposite of fiction. According to Jacques Rancière, in his analysis of Chris Marker’s La Jetée, memory is always fictional:

La fiction, c’est la mise en œuvre de moyens d’art pour construire un “système” d’actions représentées, de formes assemblées, de signes qui se répondent. Un film “documentaire” n’est pas le contraire d’un “film de fiction,” du fait qu’il nous montre des images saisies dans la réalité quotidienne ou des documents d’archives sur des événements attestés au lieu d’employer des acteurs pour interpréter une histoire inventée. Il n’oppose pas le parti pris du réel à l’invention fictionnelle. Simplement le réel n’est pas pour lui un effet à produire. Il est un donné à comprendre. (Rancière, La Fable Cinématographique 202-03)

Rancière insists that memory must be created against the overabundance of information as well as against its absence: “Elle doit se construire comme liaison entre des données, entre des témoignages de faits et des traces d’actions, comme ce σύστημα των πραγμάτων, cet ‘arrangement d’actions’ dont parle la Poétique d’Aristote et qu’il appelle muthos,” not in the sense of stereotypes of social imaginary but as a fictionalisation of the past (202).

Blitz’s fictional and factual stories reflect Chris Marker’s “memory of fiction.” Bringing together cinematographic and theatrical devices, they create a kind of on-stage spatiotemporal map—in other words, a “plane projection totalizing observations” (de Certeau 119). The map concept serves to organise dif-
ferent stories and heterogeneous testimonies, memories, and facts within the same frame, while implying “a nonhierarchical spatiality” (Foster 143). The map collates heterogeneous times on the same frame—that of the fictional ruined dance hall and the actual theatre space—and “connect[s] (on stage) what cannot be connected” in real life, without ever forming a homogeneous whole (Foster 145). Following Foucault, the Blitz archive is not a system that “unifies everything that has been said in the great confused murmur of a discourse,” but rather a system that “differentiates discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration” (Foucault 29).

Reframing the Present

The spiral dance movements in *Late Night* constitute a dramaturgical device that allows for various possible ways of looking at the condition of the theatre in the here and now: the vertiginous experience of space evokes the vertiginous experience of time. Jacques Rancière calls these times “heterochronies,” “a term that Michel Foucault coined in parallel to the term ‘heterotopias,’ which he proposed designate spaces that don’t fit in the normal distribution of territories,” as they are “combinations of spaces that are normally incompatible” (“In What Time Do We Live?” 34). In the same way, argues Rancière, “[h]eterochronies are combinations of times that are normally incompatible”; in *Late Night*, these are the past, the present, and the narrational future. “A heterochrony is a redistribution of times that invents new capacities of framing the present” (36).

The ruined dance hall could be considered to be another dispositif allowing the interweaving of different times. As Brian Dillon points out, the “confused chronologies of ruins” are related with various states of catastrophes, such as an environmental disaster or an architectural collapse:

Ruins embody a set of temporal and historical paradoxes. The ruined building is a remnant of, and portal into, the past; its decay is a concrete reminder of the passage of time. And yet by definition it survives, after a fashion: there must be a certain (perhaps indeterminate) amount of a built structure still standing for us to refer to it as a ruin and not merely as a heap of rubble. At the same time, the ruin casts us forward in time; it predicts a future in which our present will slump into similar disrepair or fall victim to some unforeseeable calamity. The ruin, despite its state of decay, somehow outlives us. And the cultural gaze that we turn on ruins is a way of loosening ourselves from the grip of punctual chronologies, setting ourselves adrift in time. Ruins are part of the long history of the fragment, but the ruin is a fragment with a future; it will live on after us despite the fact that it reminds us too of a lost wholeness or perfection. (Dillon 11)

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6. The spiral recalls Marker’s fascination with Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). The classic film finds its way not only in *La Jetée* but also into several of Marker’s works. Specifically, in *Sans Soleil* (1982) there is a direct reference to *Vertigo* as the only film “capable of portraying impossible memory—insane memory.” See Nora M. Alter (2006) 95.
Late Night’s dance hall gives the impression of having existed and been in use for a long time. It does not impart any sense of contemporaneity; it does not signify the absolute present. It bears the signs of the passage of time, but seems somehow removed from our present time.

In Cinemascope, as in Late Night, the performers are faced with the impossibility of real action, obliged to stay inside the frame even if they are haunted by the outside world. The pedestrian street and the ruined dance hall are boundaries that cannot be crossed: a theatre of memory which almost touches upon real life. Since a Blitz portrait of Europe turns out to be impossible, their filmic installation could be characterized as an anti-documentary, site-specific installation that revolves around an awareness of “things” which become protagonists in an interaction of image, light, and (live or pre-recorded) voices and sounds. This interaction allows poetic illusion to blur the concrete, immediate experience of the here and now condition. The dramaturgical structure “(r)evolves” around the tension between the concrete reality within the specific stage-frame and the imaginary outside world where the catastrophe is taking place.

A Dramaturgy of Time

Time is the key concept in Blitz’s dramaturgy; it challenges the spectator’s imaginative and observational acuity. There are no absolute truths in Blitz’s dystopian nowhere; everything is relative and thus dramatic. What matters is the present, past, and future of the people living in a specific spatial condition: a non-place in Cinemascope, a ruined dance hall in Late Night. The only shared point in their existence is that, in a more or less obvious way, they all form part of the same condition on the borders between the real and the fictional, the personal and the public, the familiar and the uncanny.

At the same time, this very specific condition demonstrates Blitz’s desire to put a dispersed community on stage. It is a discursive practice that suggests a new kind of relationship between the audience and the stage/world and a new way of thinking about our difference and our isolation: as individuals living in the same urban landscape, however partial and dispersed. Blitz’s performances assume spatial and temporal fragmentation as “a condition not only to represent but to work through” (Foster 145). They also propose new ways of “affective association” (145) within a concrete frame and, consequently, within contemporary urban society. At the same time, they stage the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of doing so.

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