

“Quint, Cordula. “Undoing Authenticity: Irony and Aporia in Robert Wilson’s early Space-Time Experiments.”

Robert Wilson’s design practice of the 1970s and 1980s has nearly always been conceptually based in a postmodern questioning of "authenticity." In his site-specific work *The King of Spain* (1973), the scenography used illusionist techniques to recreate the classic 19<sup>th</sup> century domestic interior, but the seamless volume of realist space was subsequently forced into radical crisis. The cited box-set was gradually “filled in” by a complex Steinian landscape. The performance venue had thus clearly been chosen for its cultural memory. Within the “frame” of the Anderson Theater’s decrepit decor, the single-perspective unity and causality of “Newtonian” space was undone by the radical contingencies of time and space, which were introduced by means of a multi-layered, disjunctive spatial collage.

In Müller's *Hamletmachine* (1986), “authenticity” is interrogated with far greater aesthetic sophistication. Müller's "schizophrenia" between East and West, his preference for dystopian hyperbole and his exploration of the subject’s loss of authentic position in real and ideological space find a transposition in Wilson’s intricate pastiche of three space-time paradigms. The postmodern space used for the “representation” of Müller’s teleological crisis is contrasted with the modern unity of Newton’s mechanical universe, which is inscribed in the “sobering Brechtian scene-changes”. Wilson’s “alienation effects” serve as “interludes of spatial inversion” and perpetually destabilize the spectator’s viewing experience.

In both works, Wilson's spatial "revelations" – his demonstrative and metatheatrical “showing” of the space – is inflected with irony and aporetic tensions. Other *mises en scène* will be considered in my examination – among them, Wilson’s *Death Destruction & Detroit II* of 1987.

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In the past, she has directed Heiner Müller’s *The Task* and Timberlake Wertenbaker’s *The Grace of Mary Traverse* in Toronto, and more recently, Charles Mee’s *Big Love*, David Hare’s *The Blue Room*, and Wendy Lill’s *Corker*.