Erika Fischer-Lichte and Benjamin Wihstutz’s edited volume on performance, politics, and space addresses current preoccupations about spatial concepts in response to developments in theory and practice that took place throughout the twentieth century. If we take the nineteenth century and its turn to the twentieth century as a period that was heavily constructed within the frame of temporality and historicity, as critics like Edward Soja suggest, then to understand the twentieth century, we must see it as a period in which the “reassertion of space” and the deconstruction of temporal narratives came to dominate (Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory, Soja 1989). At the close of the millennium, these themes began to manifest in postmodern concepts that questioned the very meaning of space, as critics like Hayden White and Michel Foucault have shown. History and temporality began to be seen in conjunction with social spaces and geographical contextualization as was evident in theoretical works like those by Pierre Nora. In performance, this was also true. Several of the essays in Fischer-Lichte and Wihstutz’s volume cite Max Herrmann’s 1931 essay “The Theatrical Experience of Space” as a fundamental text for understanding the performing arts as ones that can only reveal their essence within space. These ideas culminated in “happenings” and other performance art of the late 1960s and 1970s that sought to remove the dramatic spectacle from its association with the bourgeois theater space, the art object, and capitalist notions of ownership, and instead place it within the ephemeral context of space as a performance (street, art installation, etc.). When the text was no longer the privileged tool for defining the spectacle, the work of performance artists and collective groups took precedence. Performance was experienced as a fleeting event and understood within the site-specific cultural crosscurrents of a time, place, and political and social makeup, and identified through a particular individual or group of artists.

As this collection of essays reminds us, the linking together of performance and space means that these authors are exploring theater and performance within the framework of cultural geography and its subfield of topology—the association among objects and their environment—a category to which many of them turn as a defining theme for their discussions. The volume is divided into three main sections: “Placements and Boundaries” (seven essays), “Utopia and Heterotopia” (five essays), and “Strategies of Spatial...
Appropriation” (five essays). The collection has an introduction but no conclusion, which is an odd omission and would have helped tie the variety of diverse themes together. The first section addresses performance spaces and the use of space by actors within a political context and in relation to the urban settings in which the performances take place. Of note is Marvin Carlson’s opening essay “The Theatre ici”, in which he traces the divide between literature and performance theory and the relationships these have with the spectator and the space. Janette Dillon looks at the treatment of space and power on the theatrical stage during trials for monarchs, while Loren Kruger, Michael McKinnie, and Gay McAuley examine performance in the context of urban spaces (Haymarket Square, London’s South Bank, and Sydney Theatre). These three essays show how the cities’ particular environments are reflected in political protest (Haymarket Square), urban governance (London’s South Bank), and the conversion of historical buildings into theaters (Sydney). The remaining essays by Christopher Balme investigates censorship and Habermas’ concept of tolerance and Nicolas Salazar-Sutil analyzes the use of topological space in Jarry’s play as one that obfuscates a universal or absolute conception of space and time.

The second section, as is evident by the title, is based on theories that Michel Foucault’s developed throughout his writing, but most particularly in the 1967 essay “Different Spaces.” The binary of utopias (unreal perfect spaces) and heterotopias (real spaces that undo normal conceptions of space and symbolic order) forms the basis for these essays on theatrical spaces and performance. Benjamin Wihstutz’s “Other Spaces or Space of Others? Reflections on Contemporary Political Theatre” is a notable essay exploring how artists use the heterotopic stage to create politics through utopian action in a liminal place that exists in a state of exception and does not pose an impactful threat to existing orders (184). Other contributors like Ludger Schwarte trace the changing connection between theater, architecture and politics from the Greeks’ massive amphitheatres to Voltaires’s small theaters, while Julienne Rebentisch shows how Plato envisioned the theater as an ally for creating democracy, whereas Rousseau saw it as a danger to democratic structure. Patrick Primavesi investigates links between the theater and festivals showing the development of a counter project to the concept of the theater as a literary medium, and Susan Haedicke’s essay examines the work of the French group Opéra Pagaï’s that conceives art as an interaction rather than an object; a way of making place (198).

In section three, essayists look at how artists or groups use or create particular spaces to define politics and aesthetics. The two essays that best demonstrate the heart of this idea of spatial appropriation are Philip Ursprung’s examination of Gordon Matta Clark’s artistic notions of “anarchitecture” and “ruins in reverse” that combine social engagement and artistic practice, and Kirsten Maar’s exploration of William Forsythe’s choreography as a concept of relational space—one that is created through the dancers’ bodies and the traces that they leave behind. Space here is not an entity, but rather a structure. Ericka Fischer-Lichte’s essay delves into the pageant movement’s emphasis on local traditions of cities and hamlets as a reaction to modernization and industrialization in England and the
loss of this characteristic in the U.S. tradition. Jens Roselt’s very brief essay investigates memorial sites, their traits of performance, and the behaviors they elicit, while Shannon Jackson’s work focuses on the U.S. environmental movement and its ties to the highly eclectic transdisciplinary performance of *red, Black & GREEN: a blues* created by Marc Bamuthi Joseph.

Overall, this volume makes a significant contribution to ongoing questions about space, performance, and politics. However, what it does not do effectively is provide the historical framework in the introduction or missing conclusion for couching these essays within a context that explains the evolution of themes on space and cultural geography. The second section highlights only one of the influential theories of space (Foucault’s) that were in flux during the last century without any real explanation of this narrow focus, and the first and last sections do not specifically address any theoretical foundation. One is left to wonder why others like Lefebvre, Bachelard, Debord, Jameson, or many other theorists were not included.

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**Works Cited**