



Warwick Performance and Politics Network

We are an interdisciplinary network comprising colleagues from Politics, Theatre Studies, Law, and Philosophy, Sociology, English, and History. The initiative was established in 2011 with two small grants from the Warwick Social Sciences Research Forum and RCUK Roberts Funding.

The Sacred and the Profane: Rituals of Global Politics

17 May 2012

9.30 - 17.00

IATL STUDIO, MILLBURN HOUSE

In what ways, visible and unseen, does religion operate in contemporary political spectacles and rhetoric? Are 'belief' and 'conviction' the mutually exclusive currencies of preacher and politician respectively or do the two co-mingle as complimentary means to galvanise a following? Or does the secular rhetoric of most political discourse in the Western world in the twentieth century only thinly mask the force of the quasi-religious fervour of ideologies that unite 'masses'? From the 'mass spectacles' and 'revolutionary festivals' organised in the Soviet Union in the years immediately following the Bolshevik Revolution to the recent Wall Street mass protests and the Arab Spring – does something resembling the shared experience of ritual communion serve to unite the undifferentiated masses into a people that may move as a whole? What is, indeed, the role of the 'performative' and the 'theatrical' in this context? How much is spectacle and where does liturgy begin? What instruments and rhetorics that ape the sacral are employed to performatively bring a 'people' into being, where such an entity had not previously been imagined? How then to theorise the more explicit intrusions of religion into the political sphere in this context – whether in South Asian politics or in the recent US elections for Presidential candidates? The object of enquiry may then be two-pronged: the explicit tussles of religion and politics in contemporary global politics (alternatively imagined as the struggle between premodern and modern forces) and the implicit, often disguised, operations of forces strongly resembling/aping the religious experience in the so-called secular public sphere. If these questions are not far off the mark, could it then be said, that contrary to the idea consistently exported by Western secularliberal politics – religion had never really left the building? How then to read the masked performances and double-edged theatricality of this arguably quasi-religious global political sphere?

The Sacred and the Profane

Draft Programme

IATL SPACE – 9:30- 17:00 THURSDAY 17th May

Coffee

9:30 – 10:00

First session

10:00 - 12:00 (20-30 mins each + discussion) Chair: Tim White

Wallace McDowell, (Theatre Studies, Warwick) "'Cut according to his Cloth': Ian Paisley and the shifting performance of Ulster Protestant Identity"

Joshua Edelman (Central School of Speech and Drama) "Betrayal and what follows: Rituals of repentance, healing and anger in response to the church sexual abuse scandal in Britain and Ireland"

Steven Kettell (PAIS, Warwick) [on identities, rituals, rhetorics of the non-religious - title and abstract to follow]

Lunch

12:00 – 13:00

Second Session

13:00 - 15:00 (20-30 mins each plus discussion) Chair: Milija Gluhovic

Shirin Rai (PAIS, Warwick) - Political Aesthetics: on the murals in the Indian parliament -

Trina Nileena Banerjee (Art & Aesthetics, JNU) [title & abstract to follow]

Bairavee Balasubramaniam (PAIS, Warwick) (Hindu Goddesses as referents in debates in the Indian parliament - title & abstract tbc)

Third Session

15:00 – 17:00

Panel and Open House with Janelle Reinelt , Mike Saward, Tim White, Milija Gluhovic