

# Inventing the Past, Re-Writing the Present: The History and Memory on Contemporary Lithuanian Theatre Stage

**JURGITA STANIŠKYTĖ**

## **ABSTRACT**

In recent years an increasing number of performances on the Baltic theatre stage attempt to escape the dominant understanding of “performing history” as a repetition or reinforcement of the monumental representations of the historical past or as a (re)production of “mythistory” (Joseph Mali). Lithuanian creators of performances about history increasingly choose hybrid approaches of representation, merging memorialization and critique, imagination and fact, documents and speculative inventions as forms of engagement with the past. This playful re-imagination of the historical past serves as a creative laboratory, where audience ability to recognize and/or resist historical manipulations as well as to embrace plural and polyphonic nature of memory are tested. In some cases, however, Lithuanian theatre creators are interested in “truthful” or “authentic” representations of personal memories, rather than a performative investigation of mechanisms of production of the “reality effect” in historiography and their impact on audience perception. This article examines the ways in which historical events are represented on the contemporary Lithuanian theatre stage and, at the same time, addresses the larger issues around the implications of particular theatrical stagings of the past on the current understanding of the subject of history.

## **KEYWORDS**

Autobiography, history, Lithuanian theatre, memory, representation.

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“What, has this thing appear’d again to-night?” – according to theatre historians this question posed by Marcellus in *Hamlet* is the most accurate characterization of the nature of theatre. For eons, theatre has been the place where ghosts of the past appear in different forms.<sup>1</sup> This ghostly nature of theatre evokes for the spectator the effect of recognition (whether true or false), the Aristotelian *anagnorisis* or modern *déjà vu*. Repetition and recreation are essential principles of theatrical existence and each performance can be seen as an animation of the past, as a mnemonic practice.

In post-soviet Lithuanian theatre the urge to talk about history and memory became particularly noticeable after the fall of the Soviet regime. During the first years of Independence, the Lithuanian stage had served as a place to evoke erased memories of the nation’s past and to express the life narratives banned from stage for the last fifty years. The main objective of the period was to bring onstage the “silenced reality”, to symbolically fill in the uncharted territories of the collective memory of the nation. However, most often the performances engaging the past failed to escape the canonized theatrical language of Soviet Lithuanian theatre – that of visual symbols and metaphors. Such productions avoided the direct “documentary” or autobiographic approach to experiences of the past and were focused on a monumental vision of history (in F. Nietzsche’s terms), which provided examples of a glorious past while at the same time educating the present.

Freddie Rokem has remarked in his seminal book *Performing History. Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre* that “theatrical performances of history reflect complex ideological issues concerning deeply rooted national identities, subjectivities and power structures and can in some cases be seen as a willful resistance to, and critique of, the established and dominant perceptions of the past.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in recent years increasing numbers of

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1 For an elaborate analysis on this issue see Carlson, Marvin. 2001. *The Haunted Stage—Theatre as a Memory Machine*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

2 Rokem 2000, 8.

performances on the Lithuanian theatre stage were trying to escape the dominant understanding of “performing history” as a repetition or reinforcement of the monumental representations of historical past or as a production and reproduction of “mythistory” (Joseph Mali). With the advent of the new generation of theatre creators, the shift from abstract and symbolic representations of collective memory to the more direct portrayal of subjective and personal experiences of the past materialized on the Lithuanian stage. During the second decade of Independence, the “locus of recall” shifted from community to the individual as greater attention began to be paid to the dimensions of subjectivity and the so called “autobiographical memory”. On the other hand, the need to acknowledge the fragmentary nature of the “remembering subject” as well as the socially conditioned nature of memory itself, forced Lithuanian theatre artists to rethink the representations of the past onstage and to look for different ways to examine remembering as the communication of an individual experience within a particular socio-cultural context.

In the paradoxical condition when, according to trauma theories, the past is inescapably “tattooed on the present” and yet is always constructed retrospectively,<sup>3</sup> the creators of performances about history increasingly choose hybrid approaches of representation, merging imagination and fact, documents and speculative inventions, seriousness and play as a form of engagement with the past. This playful re-imagination of the historical past serves as a creative laboratory, where audience ability to recognize and/or resist historical manipulations as well as to embrace a plural and polyphonic nature of memory is tested. In some cases however, in the light of contemporary fictionalization of media and constructed narratives of “information wars”, Lithuanian theatre creators are interested in “truthful” representations of personal memories rather than the “politics of perception” – a performative investigation of mechanisms of production of the “reality effect” in historiography and its impact on audience perception.

A shift of artistic interest from collective to individual forms of remembering the past on Lithuanian theatre stage opened up yet another topic for creative investigation – the performative relationships between history and memory. Academic debates around connections and separations of history and memory were complemented by various performative interventions, claiming that these two forms of knowledge about the past can be married in the most unexpected ways. To cite Jay Winter, “the performative enhances the overlap between history and memory because it borrows from both.”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the ambiguous connections between personal memories and public historical narrative together with the reliance of both on medial or representational frameworks, became one of the points of focus for contemporary Lithuanian theatre.

These developments also encompass the burgeoning interest in what Kate Mitchell and Jerome DeGroot call “historical imaginary”, created “in order to disrupt a hierarchical approach that privileges history and marginalizes historical fiction.”<sup>5</sup> As a result of these developments, the examples of engagement with

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3 Le Roy, Stalpaert, Verdoodt 2011, 253.

4 Winter 2010, 13.

5 Mitchell 2010, 4 & DeGroot 2009.

the historical past in contemporary Lithuanian theatre range from “historiographic metafiction” (Linda Hutcheon<sup>6</sup>), which self-reflexively problematizes historical representations and questions the very possibility of historical knowledge as demonstrated in the production of *The Forest Brother* (2015) to “documentary theatre” that is concerned with the (im)possibilities of providing a “seemingly transparent window on the past”<sup>7</sup> through embodied practices of performance (for example; *The Green Meadow* (2017)).

The different ways in which the historical past is represented on the contemporary Lithuanian theatre stage are examined in this article which at the same time addresses the larger issues around the implications of particular theatrical stagings of the past for the notion of current understanding of the subject of history.

### EMBODIED LEGEND: RE-ANIMATION OF THEATRICAL PAST

*For if the present was not past at the same time as present, if the same moment did not coexist with itself as present and past, it would never pass, a new present would never come to replace this one. The past as it is in itself coexists with, and does not succeed, the present it has been.*

Gilles Deleuze, “Proust and Signs”<sup>8</sup>

In 2014, Lithuanian theatre director Jonas Jurašas decided to return to the play *Barbora Radvilaitė* (*Barbara Radziwiłł* by playwright Juozas Grušas), which he had staged in 1972. By doing so, the director strove both to recall once again the historical legend of Barbara Radziwiłł (1520-1551), the second wife of Sigismund II Augustus, crowned Queen of Poland and Grand Duchess of Grand Duchy of Lithuania, as well as to recollect the complicated history of his first Soviet interpretation of the play, in which Barbora was performed by legendary Lithuanian actress Rūta Staliliūnaitė.<sup>9</sup>

At the beginning of the performance in 1972, the symbolic figure of a Painter (performed by Viktoras Šinkariukas) presented a view of history as a static picture, an archetypal image, a sublime icon lending strength and consolation in the face of the unbearable present – Soviet occupation. In the 2014 production, the principal means by which to experience the past are empathy and embodiment. The performance begins with a monologue by an Actress (Eglė Mikulionytė) who once played the historical legend Barbora and is now fighting cancer in a hospital

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6 Hutcheon 1988.

7 Erll, Rigney 2009, 4.

8 Deleuze 2008, 37.

9 Jonas Jurašas is a modern Lithuanian theatre director of the older generation. At the end of the 1970s, as the artistic leader of the Kaunas State Drama Theatre, he created the legendary rebellious performances based on Lithuanian contemporary playwrights Kazys Saja, Juozas Glinškis and Juozas Grušas. After staging the national historical drama *Barbora Radvilaitė* by Juozas Grušas in 1972, he was forced to resign the position of the artistic leader of the theatre and to emigrate from Lithuania. The performance itself was radically transformed by censorship and Jurašas retracted his authorship. Jurašas was living in Austria, Germany and later moved to the US where he currently resides. <http://www.theatre.lt/?lng=EN&content=spektakliai&id=33> (5.10.2018).

bed: "I can now see how you felt Barbora. [...] I can now understand your fate, Barbora, better than I could before."<sup>10</sup>

The Actress and Barbora Radvilaitė, which she embodies, are visually and spatially linked with each other by the costume detail that resembles the "blood thread": the Actress does not only "lend" her body to the ghost of queen Barbora, their interrelation is also based on the ties of blood. The Actress thus literally embodies the historical past, she is represented as an intermediary, feeding the historical legend with the blood of her own past. To rephrase Wilhem Dilthey, she gives life back to the bloodless shadow of the past. It seems that the production aims at making us believe that the most profound experience of the past can be reached through empathy, compassion and emotional involvement: in order to eliminate the historical distance, first we have to identify ourselves with the past emotionally.

Like Grušas's play, the performance represents history as a field of antagonism – a conflict between the powers of good and evil, truth and deception, love and hatred. Hereby the reality of the past is thrust into a scheme of dramatic conflict visually represented on the stage by the image of a game of chess: the setting (designed by Mindaugas Navakas) resembles a chessboard on which actors move like chessmen. The image is further supported by the rhetoric of the play itself: Barbora is addressed as "the queen of a game of chess" or "white queen". However, the "game" logic of history so obvious in the setting and costumes, does not translate into the performance of the actors as they keep wavering between outwardly displaying symptoms of emotional involvement, caricature-like play and sculptural movement of historical figures.

According to the director, the major task for Eglė Mikulionytė playing the role of Barbora/Actress was to present the state of becoming: a moment when an actor impersonates a character, a flash of reality turning into fiction, a gesture of opening up the past and bringing it closer to the spectators. It is, undoubtedly, a complex task, however, it is the only way to accomplish the general idea of the production of *Barbora* – to create a link of empathy and revitalize the memory of the past. Obviously, "the state of becoming" is a very fitting metaphor for acting in general, however in practice this transformation, the central axis of the performance and the act of subjective dominance over history, is much more discernible in the external dynamics of costume, movement in space or intonation and less so in the shape of inner transformation.

In *Barbora* the historical past (the story of Queen Barbara Radziwiłł (1520-1551)) is placed alongside the theatrical past (the story about the legendary theatrical production of Jurašas' *Barbora Radvilaitė* from 1972). The re-collection of the legendary Soviet performance supplements the imagery and interpretation of

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10 In *Barbora* the textual fragments by Aušra Marija Sluckaitė added to the play by Juozas Grušas work as a meta-theatrical strategy. The creators of the performance have publicly pointed out that the images of the production have no specific references ("anonymous actress"). However, it is impossible for the audience to ignore the numerous coincidences and prevent their imagination from relating the suffering main character (Actress) to the particular Lithuanian actress, Rūta Stalliūnaitė, whose performance of Barbora in 1972 production is a theatrical legend and who succumbed to cancer few years ago.

Lithuanian myth-history with personal experiences of the theatre creators (Jonas Jurašas, Rūta Staliliūnaitė), thus reinforcing the role of theatre as a cultural form of remembrance. In performance, theatrical codes and signs provide metaphors for the creation of individual mythology inasmuch as the director and the author of the adaptation Aušra Marija Sluckaitė deliberately fuse legends of national history and aesthetic (self)quotation, historical narrative and personal experience. However, in *Barbora* Jurašas takes a look at Lithuanian (theatre) history without any intention of critical revision, ironic distance or self-reflective investigation of dominant images of the past. It seems rather, that the main desire driving the director was to repeat the past in order to re-confirm its stability – to reassert the notion that the past is unchangeable.

The positivist understanding of history “haunts” both contemporary and Soviet versions of *Barbora Radvilaitė* reiterating a concept of the past “neatly separable from the present, in which it is studied.”<sup>11</sup> The recent performance suggests not the alterity of the past but rather its stability: it seems that Jurašas is trying to convince the public that it is impossible to retrospectively “rewrite” history, because the past is already over and can only be re-lived through empathic identification – the very act of “becoming”. Furthermore, while invoking affect as a tool for engaging with the past, the current production of *Barbora* involves itself in the process of iconisation, placing history nostalgically and not critically in relation to the present. Here personal stories of the artists and legendary historical figures are intertwined not only in order to maintain an active memory of the legendary theatrical canon, but also in order to re-establish a myth-historical version of the past.

## UNBELIEVABLE BUT REAL: HISTORY AS A GAME OF PERFORMATIVE IMAGINATION

*In many cases a true war story cannot be believed. If you believe it, be sceptical. It's a question of credibility. Often the crazy stuff is true and the normal stuff isn't because the normal stuff is necessary to make believe the truly incredible craziness. In other cases, you can't even tell a true war story. Sometimes it's just beyond telling.*

Tim O'Brien, “How to Tell a True War Story”<sup>12</sup>

Certainly, the writing of myth-history is always a limiting endeavor; it excludes failures, accidents, lost chances and silent despair. Theatre performances, quite differently from traditional historiography, more often engage in discussions about loss, defeat, disappointment and helplessness, while revealing the stories of those who lurk in the shadows of historical legends and national heroes. Whilst focusing on local histories, contemporary Baltic theatre creators are willing to engage in analysis of the clashes or interdependencies between public versions of historical grand narratives and less public accounts of personal memories. Specifically, the lives that drift at the fringes of historical grand narrative become the focus of

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11 Cubitt 2007, 39.

12 O'Brien 2014, 309.

the Kaunas National Drama Theatre production *The Forest Brother* (*Miškinis*), produced in 2015 by Latvian theatre makers Valters Silis and Jānis Balodis.

The main hero of *The Forest Brother* does not belong to the pantheon of historical legends – the production tells the real life story of Latvian Jānis Pīnups (in performance he is transformed into the Lithuanian character Jonas Petrutis) who spent fifty years hiding in the basement of his sister's house. The performance begins with historian Tomas Kudirka (actor Saulius Čiučelis) trying to investigate intriguing rumours about the unbelievable life of Jonas Petrutis (actors Vainius Sodeika and Liubomiras Laucevičius), a fugitive from the Soviet Army, who fearing a military trial, went into hiding from the Soviet regime for more than fifty years. Although the point of departure for the creators of *The Forest Brother* was historical fact – they researched Jānis Pīnups story using archival documents and oral histories – the main trope of representation is theatricality and playfulness.

While uncovering fragment by fragment the story of “the invisible life” of an anti-hero *The Forest Brother* moved from fact to fiction and back again, “stretching factual statements to their breaking point and beyond.”<sup>13</sup> In certain fragments of performance the most unexpected aspects of historical reality are established as believable while others question the very foundations of reality on which historiographic facts are based. “The most incredulous things in this performance are real” - affirms playwright Janis Balodis.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, the “factuality” of the life story told in performance helps establish a thread of empathy between stage characters and audience, however temporary. On the other, this creative strategy seems to suggest that imagination and fantasy can serve as supplements for both the uncharted territories of subjective memory and “blank spots” of public historical narrative. Few facts and imagination that binds them together – this is exactly how historical narrative is produced, according to the postmodern view of historiography. Similarly the German neuroscientist Wolf Singer described memories as “data based inventions.”<sup>15</sup> According to the director Valters Silis, “In order to create a performance based on fantasy, you have to look intently into the facts and figure them out appropriately.”<sup>16</sup> *The Forest Brother* highlights the subjective and personal aspects of history while at the same time exposing how individual experiences counteract de-personalized versions of grand historical narratives. As a result, history is perceived as a powerful vehicle of manipulation: “a potential tool for emancipation and enlightenment, but also for repression and domination.”<sup>17</sup>

According to Aleida Assmann, “historiography, as theoreticians tell us, involves a rhetorical use of language and, in spite of all claims to impartiality, a specific vantage point, an unacknowledged agenda, a hidden bias.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, a postmodern understanding of the history embedded in *The Forest Brother* presents it as a locus of imagination, act of envisioning, through which particular events are picked up

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13 Winter 2010, 14.

14 Balodis 2015.

15 Assmann 2010, 40.

16 Silis 2015.

17 Cubitt 2007, 53.

18 Assmann 2010, 39.

from the stream of reality, punctuated and framed, patterns drawn and narratives modeled. Thus, the ephemeral nature of reality is fixed into meaningful story.

The limits of traditional historiography are embodied in *The Forest Brother* by the character of historian Kudirka, who openly exposes the process of selection of certain facts that would eventually assign the main protagonist the role of a legend or a victim. As an alter-ego of the playwright, Janis Balodis Kudirka's character clearly demonstrates that the story of Jonas Petrutis would be either excluded from conventional history writing or ennobled and glorified as a heroic narrative of resistance thus reducing the complexity, arbitrariness and personal ambiguities of his choices. Kudirka is presented as a mediator of the Jonas Petrutis story, conspicuously struggling not only to find the hidden facts, to uncover 'the real story', but also to construct a truthful narrative, a representational frame, that would not only be relevant to the unspoken suffering of the main protagonist and those close to him, but also 'believable'. *The Forest Brother* quite contrary to *Barbora* focuses on the act of storytelling, on construction of narrative, on the active work of imagination, rather than on the past itself. To quote Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, the performance "prevents its viewers from becoming immersed in the past; it continuously keeps them on the surface of medial representations, thus creating an experience of the medium and drawing attention to the mediatedness of memory."<sup>19</sup>

The performative historiography of *The Forest Brother* suggests that it is impossible to experience history directly, actively, it is a matter of belief rather than knowledge. Contrary to *Barbora*, *The Forest Brother* implies that history or individual memories are always mediated and subject to change. According to Assmann, "what individuals remember are repeated representations, which are rarely preserved over the years in a state of fixed stability and uncontaminated purity."<sup>20</sup> The performance fluctuates between theatrical and real, playful and serious, history and imagination, fact and fiction, empathy and alienation, being and showing, it navigates the path between empirical 'truth' and imagination, between personal memories and counter-histories, between fantasy and authenticity. At times illusions are disrupted onstage only to be once again restored. Some fragments induce the effects of recognition and identification while others force the audience to acknowledge accidental characters of historiography, for example, when Kudirka at the end of the first part of production is forced to admit that he was wrong to draw conclusions about the real motives and historical role of Petrutis. In *The Forest Brother*, the heroic model of history is visibly dethroned demonstrating that individual memory is not, to use Geoffrey Cubitt's phrase, "history's defining 'other' but rather a congenerous way to understand a contradictory nature of writing about the past."<sup>21</sup>

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19 Astrid Erll, Ann Rigney 2009, 5.

20 Assmann 2010, 49.

21 Cubitt 2007, 31.

## PACKAGING UTOPIA: TESTIMONIES OF THE INVENTED PAST

*Our narrative self-fashioning oriented as much to the present and future as to the past, may even possess an evolutionary, adaptive value, helping to anchor our shifting identities in time.*

Paul John Eakin, "Living Autobiographically" <sup>22</sup>

The ambiguous imbalance between understanding history as the "recovery of lived experience" and the inescapable mediatedness of both history and memory clearly marks the productions of *The Green Meadow* by stage director Jonas Tertelis and dramaturg Kristina Werner (2017). The production by the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre focuses on the real life-stories of the both the former and current workers at the Ignalina nuclear power plant, located in Visaginas municipality. Tertelis and Werner constructed the performance plot of *The Green Meadow* from field interviews with local residents that were creatively 'moulded' into the narratives about the rise and fall of Soviet industrial utopia. Mixing personal experiences with family histories as well as topics from historical, political, and popular discourses, the story focuses on the decommission of the old Ignalina nuclear power plant, negotiated and agreed on by the European Commission and the Lithuanian government in 1999 and the consequences of this decision on the lives and identities of the residents of the region.

Simultaneously mixing the techniques of storytelling and theatrical enacting, these stories are retold and embodied onstage by the real local residents of Visaginas. Through these embodied testimonies, the performers of *The Green Meadow* become live witnesses to a transitional period in the history of the region. This long journey (the official closing date of Ignalina's NPP is estimated to be 2038) from Soviet industrialization through post-Soviet social stagnation into the territory of the unknown is enacted by Visaginas residents as a part of both a personal and public ritual of liminality, a space, to use Victor Turner's phrase, of "betwixt and between", where participants are stripped of their old identity, but have not yet acquired a new one.

Appearance onstage of the very subjects of autobiographic material redoubles the urge for authentic presence embedded in the very nature of performances of autobiography. According to Deidre Heddon, "Autobiographical performances can capitalize on theatre's unique temporality, its here and nowness, and on its ability to respond to and engage with the present, while always keeping an eye on the future."<sup>23</sup> However, in case of *The Green Meadow* this "stage authenticity", and the promise of an unmediated presence is treated uncritically. Creators of the performance not only fail to acknowledge the act of objectification present in first-person autobiographic performances, but also seem to forget that, according to Heddon, "the presentation of self (in performance particularly) is a re-presentation, and often a strategic one."<sup>24</sup>

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22 Ekin 2008, 11.

23 Heddon 2008, 2.

24 Ibid, 27.

Indeed, the forms of articulation of the subjective experiences of living in the liminal space of socio-industrial and ideological transitioning in *The Green Meadows* seem to use pre-existing narrative models, that function similarly to “social frames”<sup>25</sup> (Maurice Halbwachs) or “memory formats”<sup>26</sup> (Aleida Assmann). Furthermore, linear and romanticized model stories in the quest for authentic values and struggles to keep one’s identity intact<sup>27</sup> fail to recognize not only the heterogeneous and conflicting nature of individual remembrances of the past, but also the intrinsic antagonisms of collective or public memories, especially those existing on the intersection of competing ideological positions. According to Isabel Karremann, “cultural frames of memory do not, as Halbwachs’s teleological model suggests, peacefully follow one after the other, but they constitute simultaneous, competing claims to authority and truth, claims that are sometimes staked violently.”<sup>28</sup>

In *The Green Meadows* the nostalgic mode of remembering of an idyllic past of the industrial “childhood” of Visaginas dominate the story line. The only delicate hint at building a counter-narrative is provided onstage by Helene Ryding, Independent Energy Consultant from the UK, who was involved in the negotiation process between the EC and Lithuanian government. However, Helene Ryding’s position reiterates that of the politically dominant class, only reinforcing the stereotype that the decision to close Ignalina’s NPP was forced from the outside, and that an “outsider” is not able to fully comprehend the feelings and needs of local residents. Eventually, the “encapsulation” of personal memories into coherent narrative structures, devoid of almost any antagonisms and ideological complexities, deprives regional memory cultures of their intrinsic heterogeneity, smudges over their controversies, masks relationships of power, thus “packaging” a socio-political story about Visaginas as a romantically eternal and intrinsically human strive for progress and happiness.

Furthermore, representational models of the performance produce an effect of “dramatization” which is exactly the opposite of the intentions of the creators of *The Green Meadow*: instead of authentic “effects of the real” the spectators are faced with stereotypes and romanticised narratives that render personal experiences “theatrical” rather than “documentary”. Thomas Postlewait has remarked in his writing about autobiography, that it is almost impossible to separate “face and mask, presence and absence, public and private personality, life and art.”<sup>29</sup> Therefore, there is always a danger when dealing with autobiographic material of it becoming “standard references, icons, stereotypes, or even screen memories.”<sup>30</sup> One way to avoid that “trap” is to openly treat autobiography as a process in which personal

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25 Halbwachs 1992.

26 Assmann 2010, 35-50.

27 According to Marie-Francoise Chanfrault-Duchet, these “narrative models” can be identified as Epic, Romanesque and Picaresque. For more on “narrative models” see, Chanfrault-Duchet, Marie-Francoise. 1991. “Narrative Structures, Social Models and Symbolic Representations in the Life Story.” In S. B. Gluck, D. Patal (eds.). *Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, London: Routledge, 77–92.

28 Karremann 2015, 10.

29 Postlewait 1989, 248.

30 Assmann 2010, 49.

stories are “dressed” in the specific *mise-en-scene* in order to retain “credibility”, to demonstrate the process of construction of the conceptual self, or, according to Paul John Eakin, “narrative identity.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, to disclose the operations of cultural frames of memory rather than just re-presenting them. Quite the contrary, *The Green Meadows* seems to ignore the fact that personal memories are the products of creation, constructed in order to compose a past that one can live with, while at the same time deeply involved in the complex negotiations of the collective versions of the past.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In this article the means of performing the past on contemporary Lithuanian theatre stages have been discussed. The examples of engagement with the historical past range from the empathic embodiment of historical and theatrical legends in *Barbora*, which supports a positivist vision of an unchangeable past, to the historical “meta-fiction” of *The Forest Brother*, where imaginative extensions of real-life stories playfully problematize representations of both history and memory, questioning the very possibility of “neutral” knowledge of the past. The third case study – *The Green Meadow* - a mixture of “documentary theatre” and autobiographic performance techniques, is concerned with the possibilities of translating an unmediated experience onstage through embodied practices of performance.

All three examples are differently involved with the transformation of personal to public (cultural) memories. However, if *The Forest Brother* manages to demonstrate that history and cultural memory, according to Assmann, “has an inbuilt potential for ongoing changes, innovations, transformations, and reconfigurations,”<sup>32</sup> the other two seem to fall into the traps of homogenization and reduction of individual experience.

### **AUTHOR**

**Jurgita Staniškytė** (dr.) heads the Faculty of Arts and is a Professor of Theatre Studies Department at Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania). She has published numerous scientific and critical articles on contemporary Lithuanian theatre in the context of the processes of Baltic stage art, performative aspects of post-soviet Lithuanian culture, creative communication and audience development. She serves as the Board member of HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) and the Governing Board member of EU Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) on Cultural Heritage and Global Change. She was recently elected to the position of chairman of the Board of “Kaunas the European Capital of Culture 2022”. She has published four monographs.

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31 Ekin 2008.

32 Assmann 2010, 44.

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