
TDR Editor Richard Schechner was not involved in the commissioning or editing of this review. — TDR Books section eds.

In 1981, Richard Schechner famously proclaimed “The Decline and Fall of the (American) Avant-Garde” on the pages of *PAJ: Performing Arts Journal*. In 2010, *New Literary History* offered an alternative account of the avantgarde’s fate in his essay “The Conservative Avant-Garde.” Here, Schechner acknowledged that a contemporary avantgarde was thriving, but that it had become a substantially different animal. Where the traditional avantgarde radically disrupted the status quo, artists of what Schechner termed today’s “niche-garde” have focused on perfecting the techniques of the postwar avantgarde and mining their known registers, rather than risking failure. “Many of these artists are on the left personally, but in their artistic practice, in terms of venues, audiences, and effects on the political world, this left is apolitical, a style left rather than a workers’ left” (2010:27). The essay, like its predecessor, was a polemic and one that self-consciously spoke from and about the insular — or what Brecht would call “culinary” — downtown New York performance scene. But, it was also a frank glance at the author’s past, a provocation to reconsider the politics of conservation and recollection more broadly for artistic production and for scholarship. We might ask: After several decades of radical invention, does the “antidiscipline” of performance studies threaten to become just such a “niche-garde”?

A slightly revised version of “The Conservative Avant-Garde” figures prominently in Schechner’s newest volume, *Performed Imaginaries*, where it joins six other chapters that have been previously published in a variety of venues: the earliest piece was first presented as a talk in 2002; the most recent was published in Portuguese in 2014 and is published in English for the first time here. In between, chapters range across American experimental theatre and performance art of the late 20th century, to the terrorist acts of 9/11, to the yearly Ramlila festival in northern India, and to the discipline of performance studies itself. Return and revision are guiding principles throughout: “Writing for me is editing and revising — like rehearsing a theatrical production” (ix). In “Points of Contact’ Revisited,” for example, Schechner updates his influential chapter from the 1985 book *Between Theater and Anthropology* to incorporate new developments in the intervening 30 years of scholarship, including theories of embodiment and cognitive science. He claims that recent research on mirror neurons and affective interrelations between bodies confirm the principles guiding non-Western approaches to actor training and indigenous modes of knowledge production and transmission. The Rasaboxes technique he developed in the 1980s and 1990s, based on Sanskrit performance theory, becomes a case in point.
In place of a single overarching thematic to draw the collection together, Schechner himself emerges as the subject, the book a self-portrait. The world on view is his own — New York and an adopted interest in India; much of the work referenced was published in TDR (which he edited from 1962–1969, and again from 1985 to the present) or in anthologies and journals edited by some of the innumerable scholars with whom he has worked over his long career.

It is tempting at times here and throughout the book to see Schechner as a synecdoche for performance studies at large. This is most apparent in an extensive dialogue with two Brazilian interlocutors that reflects on the cultural scene of the 1960s, the innovations of The Performance Group, the origins of TDR, and the founding of the NYU branch of the field of performance studies. A highlight of the collection, the account nevertheless remains tethered to Schechner’s experience; however capacious, and however forgivable, it neglects — for instance — the importance of Northwestern University in the narrative of the discipline.

An exercise in theoretical thinking and living, uncertainty and wonder trouble the edges of the book. Schechner recalls a theoretical inclination dating from his childhood, that “[t]o perform is to engage in lifelong active study. To grasp every book as a script — something to be played with, interpreted, and reformed/remade” (9). He struggles with where his writing takes him in some of these essays; upon proposing (after Karlheinz Stockhausen) that 9/11 is perhaps the only art act that has changed world history, Schechner admits: “Having just written this, I confess that I am very uncomfortable. I have reasoned my way into a position that I ethically reject” (73). Such irresolution recognizes the limits of theoretical writing, but also represents the fact that these concerns are lasting ones, that they will provoke further revisions and returns.

This divergent activity might be the elusive “imaginary” of Schechner’s title, which is itself only mentioned in brief in the magisterial essay on the Ramlila festival of Ramnagar that takes up nearly one third of the book. He writes of the month-long citywide festival as “the enactment of an imaginary space, an entire city materialized out of the imagination” (81), which overlays and interweaves the epic of the Ramayana into the very fabric of the city and its surroundings. Schechner’s longstanding engagement with Ramnagar is visibly marked in reproductions of his own photographs from 1976, 1978, 2006, and 2013 that accompany the text, and he traces out how changes in the material landscape have impacted the performance cycle. This second city with its groundwork for the imaginary might stand alongside the ever-present, but less explicitly acknowledged, first city of New York that grounds so much of the other writing. In both cases, writing and performance act as interventions that conserve and reorient the actual toward what is possible.

Schechner is most concerned with the responsibilities and possibilities afforded those who belong to the community he first imagined decades ago: performance theorists and practitioners. In the first chapter of the book, “Can We Be the (New) Third World?” Schechner proposes that performance theorists and makers model a way of living that foregrounds becoming over being, that forges new relationships and active imaginings that might transgress political and social borders. It’s a manifesto that makes explicit the political urgency undergirding Performed Imaginaries. In a final section of the chapter, “A PS for PS,” Schechner overtly contemplates his outlook for the field, here cast in dialogue with the poet W.B. Yeats’s late ruminations on aging. He writes that “I am trying to hold things together, to not surrender to ‘facts,’ but struggling to imagine alternatives” (14). Performed Imaginaries embraces the struggle to imagine alternatives to a wide range of cultural events — theatre, performance art, ritual, terrorism — but also to Schechner’s own lived body of work. It shows us how to cast a theoretical light on its objects. In spite, and perhaps because of, its occasional tentativeness and ambivalence, this is an important addition to the legacy of one of the great thinkers about performance.

— Daniel Sack
References


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In *Performance and the Global City*, editors D.J. Hopkins and Kim Solga offer an exhilarating contribution to performance studies, urban studies, and the ever-urgent interrogation of “the global.” The collection extends the work of *Performance and the City* (2009), edited by Hopkins, Solga, and Shelley Orr. The previous collection sought to apprehend the (at the time) new fact that over 50 percent of the world’s population lived in cities. The new collection has moved forward to grapple with the “risk- and potential-laden” sites of the global city as formed by the intersections of neoliberal capital, forced and autonomous mobilities, and quotidian negotiations of space and place (3). The editors curate a range of authors, sites, and methodologies intent on dislodging the hemispheric prioritization of northern and western cities as default locations for examinations of the global and the urban. Simultaneously, the collection prioritizes borders: of the nation-state, between and within cities, across the Atlantic, within a mega-region, or inside a single kilometer. Hopkins and Solga extend Harvey Young and Ramón H. Rivera-Servera’s (2011) articulation of the border as a lived site of violence and possibility, of constriction and becoming. The collection offers significant contributions to performance studies methodologies, including artist-scholar collaborative writing, personal accounts operating as critical theoretical sources, and rigorously interdisciplinary engagements with space and place.

The collection is divided into three sections of four essays each. Section one, “Mobilities and In/Civilities: Global Urban Borderlands,” focuses on borders. Jean Graham-Jones examines how the 2008 La Plata opening of the revival of *Eva, el gran musical argentino* destabilized the presumed primacy of Buenos Aires in local, hemispheric, and international conceptualizations of gender, history, and political and cultural identity. Susan Bennett and Loren Kruger challenge the Western and Northern centrism endemic to discussions and discourses of the global city. Bennett discusses how Shanghai performs itself and the West in order to produce its own global identity, despite and alongside persistent global Orientalist representations of China. Kruger’s
dynamic exploration of performative acts and collaborations between art and urban planning in the inner city of postapartheid Johannesburg offers a nuanced theorization of a Southern global urban center’s “tentative return to civility” (20). The final essay of the section, cowritten by Kim Solga and Jennifer H. Capraru, details the production processes in Kigali (2008), on tour in Rwanda (2008 onwards) and in Toronto (2010) of the Kinyarwanda-language production of The Monument, written by Canadian Colleen Wagner and translated by Wajdi Mouawad. Solga and Capraru offer an exemplary model of a “relational comparative approach to global urban studies” (43). In describing and theorizing key moments within the rehearsal and performance processes in Rwanda and Canada, the authors also track how performance reveals intersections of violence, access, and representation as enacted between the South and the North.

In section two, “Transacting Bodies/Embodied Currencies: Subjects and Cities,” two essays focus on tourism and two on commuting. Nicolas Whybrow reflects on undergraduate study-abroad pedagogy. He describes how his students intervened in narratives of Venice (sinking city, global economic development, local displacement) through performative acts of tourism. Jason Bush, in turn, offers a critical reconceptualization of the relationship between tourism and agency. Bush argues that, although the Peruvian Scissors Dance has been highly commodified for global consumption, the performers — through the act of touring — self-actualize global indigenous agency. Simon Jones and Paul Rae recount the process of creating, performing, and adapting two “ambulant audio performances” (140) about commuting, one by a UK-based company and one by a Singapore company. Confronted with the excesses of unscripted action characteristic of interactive, immersive, and site-specific performance, the authors reflect on how the pieces’ original goals gave way to improvisational interactions, not only between actors, script, and spectators, but also with mobility itself, destabilizing the assumptions of monotony, habit, and surprise that had initially fueled the artists. Social and cultural geographer Melissa Butcher offers a particularly exciting essay concerning the building and use of Delhi’s metro. Butcher uses her qualitative study of a diverse group of young adult metro riders to examine performed negotiations of personal, local, and national sociocultural and geopolitical identities in India.

In section three, “Citizen Stages: Acts of Dissent in the Global City,” four essays focus on locations that have been the sites of “mass protests, mass ethnic violence and even literal war in recent memory” (13). Ana Martínez examines the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional’s 2001 peaceful occupation of Mexico City’s Zócalo. Martínez analyzes the moment of the EZLN’s entrance into the main square — the ceremonial center of what had been the Aztec city Tenochtitlán — as an intervention into state-sanctioned erasure of indigenous histories and epistemologies, from “contact” to 2001. Though she acknowledges the continued anti-indigenous racism of the Mexican state, she argues convincingly for characterizing the EZLN entrance as a triumphant mark on public, global memory. Silvija Jestrovic observes the interaction of international media and local cultural practices in creating and sustaining ideas of the “world city.” Jestrovic’s early focus on the 1992–1995 war’s affects on what she terms Sarajevo’s “heterotopic capacity” is particularly compelling (203). Nesreen Hussein recounts how she experienced the events of the Arab spring in Cairo, her home city, while living in London. The result is a deeply compelling critical inquiry, voiced through personal and theoretical engagement with dislocation, the virtual, and melancholy. Philip Hager examines a year in the life of the main public square in Athens to track how the global city resists and acquiesces to crises of the economy and immigration.

Solga and Hopkins’s collection deftly engages with the constrictive and empowering aspects of the global urban through a range of perspectives and methodologies. It can be challenging for the reader to delve into the complicated contexts of the sites of the essays. Yet, the density of the analyses is energizing rather than exasperating, and acts as an extension of the disorientational nature that is characteristic of the global urban as subject and object of study. Through authorial candor, examinations of seemingly “small” actions, and troubled questions rather than strident conclusions, the collection additionally models a rigorous intimacy, consistently
contextualized by the complex theoretical and lived exigencies of the sites of the individual essays and the preoccupations of the collection itself.

—Lisa Jackson-Schebetta

Reference


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Dominika Laster is a TDR Books section coeditor. She was not involved in the commissioning or editing of this review. —Ed.

Dominika Laster’s *Grotowski’s Bridge Made of Memory: Embodied Memory, Witnessing and Transmission in the Grotowski Work* offers a sustained critical analysis of key concepts in Jerzy Grotowski’s praxis and rhetoric that spans the entirety of his (and his successors’) work, one informed by close critical study; an impressive number of first-person interviews conducted in Polish, French, and English; and a nuanced understanding of Polish linguistic and cultural contexts.¹

The volume, part of Seagull Press’s Enactments series, edited by Richard Schechner, is handsomely produced, with 17 photographs, 14 of which are by Andrzej Paluchiewicz, a member of the Laboratory Theatre from 1966 to 1976.

Laster’s approach is thematic rather than chronological. Her primary labor has been “to understand by approaching, as closely as possible, Grotowski’s own understanding and praxis of these themes” (5). By approaching key terms from a variety of perspectives, Laster develops a palimpsest of meanings for these terms, rather than fixing rigid definitions. Since Laster’s approach is to elucidate the use of these terms *within* “the Grotowski work” (as she terms it), she for the most part does not challenge the use of terms such as “essence,” “verticality,” or even

¹. Laster draws on original interviews and archival research as well as important Polish scholarly works on Grotowski that remain wholly or partially untranslated into English. Among the most significant of these are Degler and Ziółkowski (2006); Kolankiewicz (2001), and Osiński (1998), as well as numerous shorter texts by Grotowski himself.
“memory” by interpreting them in relation to other critical discourses (a few exceptions are noted below). This leaves the reader to determine whether or not the Grotowski work speaks to other discourses of embodied knowledge, or whether it is a hermetic system, understood only on its own terms, by sanctioned practitioners or interpreters. However, her book provides a useful and provocative analysis for those who wish to understand the lexicon of the Grotowski work in context.

In the brief and affecting Preface and Introduction, the author positions herself as someone whose “exposure to Grotowski” growing up in Wrocław, Poland, in the 1980s and 1990s was “long and gradual” and for whom Grotowski “has always been a point of reference, someone I measured myself up to and against” and even (in a phrase that develops meaning as the argument of her book moves forward) “an imagined relative” (3).

The heart of the book is divided into four chapters. In the first, “Embodied Memory,” Laster addresses key concepts such as “body-memory,” “body-life,” “essence,” and “the I-I” from Grotowski’s early theatre work through his phases of research on Paratheatre, Theatre of Sources, and Art as vehicle, concluding that for Grotowski “memory functioned, at least in part, as a mode of inquiry, an instrument of the rediscovery of essence” (49). The significance of memory as a mode of inquiry is emphasized by one of the insightful linguistic glosses Laster develops throughout the book, in this case on the term “man of knowledge [człowiek poznania]” from Grotowski’s important and dense text “Performer” ([1988] 1997): “[C]złowiek poznania is not, as the English rendering might suggest, one who is in possession of knowledge; rather it is the person who is actively engaged in a continuous search for knowledge and discovery” (40). This slight shift of emphasis, from one who knows to one who does is central to the analyses of Laster’s study, and to a true understanding of the Grotowski work.

The implication of memory functioning as “a mode of inquiry,” Laster shows, is that the importance of the memory is not its objective veracity, but rather its efficacy as a stimulus to “body-in-life.” As Thomas Richards told Laster, “there is an ‘as-if’ involved. I’m doing this ‘as-if’ it was my father in a specific instance that I am remembering” (41). It is less important that the experience/event occurred as such, than that the precise details of remembering/imagining provide a stimulus to the active bodily search of the doer.

Chapter 2, “Czuwaj (Be Vigilant): Vigilance and Witnessing in the Grotowski Work,” provides valuable analyses of Night Vigil (Nocne Czuwanie, 1976) and The Vigil (Czuwanie, 1977), from Grotowski’s little-studied and under-documented Paratheatre period. Laster connects these Paratheatre explorations to earlier and later periods by identifying the “active search for something unknown conducted through nonhabitual work with the body” at its center (66). She charts a transition from “spectator” to “witness” in Grotowski’s theatre work (79). However, since she acknowledges that, “at least in the domain of Art as vehicle” the presence of the witness “is not necessary to verify or give meaning to the processes experienced by the doer,” the role of witness would seem to be vitiated in the later stages of Grotowski’s work (89).

In chapter 3, “Grotowski’s Ladder: Making the Archaic Vertical Connection,” Laster describes Grotowski’s use of the terms “verticality” and “the higher connection.” The chapter is notable for her discussion of the influence of the Gnostic concept of “twinship” on Art as vehicle. Laster develops a close textual analysis of Grotowski’s use of Gnostic sources, as well as a reading of how “twinship” plays out in the praxis of Art as vehicle.

The fourth and final chapter, “‘Let Me Take You to the Land of Your Ancestors’: Grotowski and Transmission,” is the most provocative. Laster evokes Benedict Anderson’s concept of

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2. Laster thus sidesteps a direct confrontation between Grotowski’s claim of an “essence” that precedes such differences, and poststructuralist critiques of “essence” such as those made by Philip Auslander (1997:13–38).

3. Thus the efficacy of the memory, or the process, is verified “vis-à-vis the work leader” (48).
“imagined communities” to build an argument for how imagined ancestral connections function in Grotowski’s later work, through a cogent analysis of the web of intercultural imaginings operative between Grotowski and Amon Frémon, a voudou priest with whom Grotowski collaborated during his Theatre of Sources period. As Laster notes, the encounter between Frémon and Grotowski—which Laster is the first theatre scholar to write about—was “multi-layered” and “saturated by misconceptions and misapprehensions.” Her account “challenges Grotowski’s famous dictum ‘You are someone’s son’” (128). Laster’s point is not that such imaginative processes are insubstantial. Rather, she couples her insight into Grotowski’s relationship to Frémon with the arguments she has already made for the importance of “active searching” for an understanding of “vigilance,” “body-memory,” and “człowiek poznania.” She concludes that, while “the actual place of origin, the source, the ancestor is imagined,” this is not “in a sense of fantasizing”—not passive, disengaged, or in the mind only—but rather “conducted actively with the body and voice. The doing is an active questioning [...]” (134). And that, Laster concludes, is the value of the Grotowski work, whether for practitioner (“doer”), witness, or scholar: the challenge “to be something more than yourself” (148).

— Kermit Dunkelberg

References


Kermit Dunkelberg was an actor at the Second Studio of Wrocław, Poland, and is a cofounder with Kim Mancuso of Pilgrim Theatre Research and Performance Collaborative in Ashfield, MA. He is the author of several articles on Grotowski, and “Grotowski and North American Theatre: Translation, Transmission, Dissemination,” his PhD dissertation (NYU, Performance Studies, 2008). kermit.dunkelberg@gmail.com

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In the 1990s, performance art from the US-Mexico border region rose to prominence in many cultural arenas. The militarization of the US-Mexico border, NAFTA, the Columbus quincentenary, the immigrant rights movement, and the femicide in Ciudad Juárez, among other factors, underscored the urgency of art being produced in border contexts. At the same time, debates in the United States about the role of public art and multiculturalism brought art from the border region to the attention of broad publics and helped consolidate “border art” as a category in international art worlds. The San Diego/Tijuana area in particular became associated
with art about borderlands experience, through the performances and installations of the San Diego-based Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo (BAW/TAF) and the bina
tional InSite arts festivals. As border policies dominate current political discussions in the US, what can we learn by considering border art as a “three-decades-long case study of artists addressing society through art” (3)? How does this category continue to inform art-making and frameworks for the exhibition and study of art?

Ila Nicole Sheren’s *Portable Borders* lucidly chronicles border performance art as a category and archive, from the early BAW/TAF experiments of the 1980s to recent work by artists in other global locations. Sheren is especially interested in tracing that process whereby “border art” ceased to refer exclusively to site-specific works produced in relation to everyday life in the US-Mexico border region and instead became “portable,” that is, capable of addressing a “state of mind as well as the boundary between nations” and even “places of coexisting cultural or social difference” (60). Whether presented as emblematic of its origin or repurposed for new contexts and themes, as border art became increasingly “portable” by the early 1990s, the phrase inevitably implied thoughtful attention to the relation between art and site on the part of artists, critics, and publics.

Sheren points out that border art traveled through iterable performances and personae. And, rather than stress the uniqueness of experience or identity, some border artists and arts administrators cast audiences themselves as border-crossers, by virtue of their participation in interactive performances and exhibitions. Sheren expands on this model of knowledge transmission by citing Walter Mignolo’s concept of border gnosis, which refutes the epistemological dominance of the West in center/periphery models of colonial expansion, endowing border art with pedagogical potential. Border art also traveled through publicity, criticism, and media, and it proliferated rhizomatically, as artists working in areas affected by dynamics similar to those of the US-Mexico border region produced politically conscious art projects informed by contemporary performance practices.

Over four chapters, Sheren’s study casts spotlights on particular performances as turning points or defining moments in the transformation of border performance art. The first chapter focuses on the foundation of the BAW/TAF in 1984 through the Workshop’s reconfiguration in 1989. Among the strengths of Sheren’s study are interludes connecting the BAW/TAF to currents of conceptualism, Fluxus, performance, and body art. The members of BAW/TAF readily grasped that everyday performances exacted by the border apparatus to enforce identity, legality, and movement could be heightened through performance, as in *End of the Line* (1986), in which the BAW/TAF members costumed as “border stereotypes” (41) gathered for a ludic Thanksgiving dinner/Last Supper at Border Field State Park, where the border fence used to end just before reaching the Pacific Ocean.

Sheren notes that some of the BAW/TAF members “conceived of the border as a multicultural laboratory, a place to carry out progressive, utopian social experiments,” while others regarded the border as “the site of failed [...] experiments in state social control and economic stratification” (25). The second chapter marks the diverging paths among the BAW/TAF members that became pronounced by the early 1990s, as some founding members moved away from San Diego, while others remained in the region and pursued community-based art projects. Sheren closely follows the post-BAW/TAF career of Guillermo Gómez-Peña, who left the group in 1989. She describes Coco Fusco and Gómez-Peña’s much commented upon experiment in “reverse ethnography,” *Cage Performance: Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*...
(1992), as “the first physical embodiment of the portable border” (72). Later, Gómez-Peña collaborated with members of La Pocha Nostra performance troupe on *Mapa Corpo* (2003–2009), a performance that created an analogy between a woman’s body and “the Iraq War as an exercise in mapmaking.” For Sheren, *Mapa Corpo* represents the portable border’s “evolution into a global, multiethnic (and pan-regional) concept” (75).

The third chapter returns border art to the San Diego/Tijuana region, this time as a “brand” (96) promoted by the InSite art festivals, which took place over a 13-year period beginning in 1992. Several InSite performances, in Sheren’s opinion, elegantly straddle the portable and regional borders outlined in her framing argument. *The Cloud* (2000) by Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar and *One Flew Over the Void* (2005) by Venezuelan artist Javier Téllez appropriated border “airspace” in performances that transcended the border’s built environment (109). Téllez spectacularly launched a human cannonball over the fence from Mexico to the US, while Jaar released a cloud of white balloons commemorating migrant lives lost in hazardous border-crossings. With her artist-centered approach, Sheren is less critical of InSite than some scholars, who have scrutinized the festival’s celebratory binationalism, policy dimensions, and funding profile. Yet, she notes, InSite “rerouted Mignolo’s border thinking” by bringing “expertise” to the region for “the creation of new knowledge at and for the border” (104).

Tania Candiani’s *Battleground* (2009), a performance that coordinated simultaneous events in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez foregrounding women’s labor and self-defense, signals the turn toward diverse manifestations of border art in the book’s final chapter. Here Sheren presents a range of projects that “literalize the border as a zone of negotiation and reveal border art in its current, fluid, post-border condition” (134). Among them are Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Caladilla’s socially engaged works carried out on the island of Vieques off the coast of Puerto Rico, the location of ongoing protests against US military presence on the island for training and weapons testing. In Allora and Caladilla’s *Land Mark* (2001), participants designed bas-relief images for the soles of their shoes, which left protest messages indexing their movement through this contested area. Sheren’s work concludes with a reflective epilogue in which she proposes that border art “be used to rethink art history from its borders” (135).

Sheren observes in her introduction that, “it is the task of the political artist to encapsulate the situation — the enduring image, sound, or other lasting sensation” (3). It is clear that even the early *in situ* performances by the BAW/TAF deployed border metaphors through a range of aesthetic strategies; the potential for portability was inherent in their project. Since the mid-1980s, along with border performance art, the border apparatus itself has been on the move, with a dramatic increase in migrant removals taking place in the interior of the United States since the creation of Homeland Security. The performance art presented in Sheren’s study helps make visible the borders that traverse many US institutions and communities.

— Claire F. Fox

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Everyday behaviors are critical to understanding constructions of race and racism. This is the key point within Ju Yon Kim’s persuasively written book, *The Racial Mundane: Asian American Performance and the Embodied Everyday*. Kim examines a diverse array of material, including theatrical performances, films, novels, newspaper articles, and YouTube videos. Similarly, she draws from an eclectic assortment of theorists to support her argument. Among the most critical to her study are Bertolt Brecht, whose discussion of theatrical alienation provides an important method of defamiliarizing the everyday; Michael Omi and Howard Winant, whose groundbreaking work on racialization serves as the jumping-off point for Kim’s discussion of race; and Pierre Bourdieu, whose conception of *habitus* as an embodiment of social structures is central to Kim’s demonstration of the ways in which individual and collective behaviors contribute to larger historical patterns. Kim’s application of these theoretical frames provides insight into how performance can intervene and/or elucidate the ways Asian Americans are represented and understood vis-à-vis US culture.

Kim’s conception of “the racial mundane” seeks to examine the space between quotidian behaviors and perceptions of those behaviors. She focuses her attention on Asian Americans, noting how everyday activities by specific racialized bodies inform perceptions of assimilation and alienation. Race is often involuntarily performed, and seen as representative of a certain grouping of people regardless of the intentions of those being observed. As Kim states early in her introduction, “The mundane, as something enacted by the body that is not necessarily of the body, inserts a productive uncertainty whereby the prerogative to manage racial others can be channeled into efforts to change their behaviors” (4). In other words, the fact that racialized bodies perform certain behaviors does not mean that they will always perform those behaviors. Also, the meaning of particular behaviors might change if taken up by someone from a different racialized group.

However, while addressing the anxieties associated with modes of conduct, Kim is quick to observe that the focus on what specific bodies do often obscures economic factors, which are just as relevant. A clear example of how such factors can figure into the discussion is seen in chapter 3, which focuses on interracial conflict between African Americans and Korean Americans in New York and Los Angeles during the early 1990s. Journalists reported on cultural differences that were seen to be at the root of misunderstandings between Korean shopkeepers and their customers in predominantly African American neighborhoods. It was said that Koreans did not look their customers in the eye or make physical contact when giving back change—a behavior seen as rude by African Americans and as respectful by Korean Americans. But while these interactions may have contributed to an animosity between these demographic groups that eventually led to boycotts and violence, they do not account for existing structural problems, such as the difficulty many African Americans experienced getting a loan to start up small businesses within their own neighborhoods.

Kim interweaves a cogent analysis of various factors contributing to the so-called “Black-Korean conflict” with a discussion of Elizabeth Wong’s *Kimchee and Chitlins* (1993) and Anna Deavere Smith’s *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (1993), two dramatic works that reflect upon these same issues, often through an examination of quotidian details. According to Kim, “While conventions may go unremarked in the everyday, their reenactment in theatrical performance makes it possible to examine their relationship to social and political concerns” (135). Wong’s
play centers on a Japanese American TV reporter covering the boycott of a Korean American-owned store, and stages not only what is broadcast, but also what gets edited out of her stories and interviews because they are not seen as newsworthy. Smith is well known for her style of documentary theatre, in which she reenacts the speech and mannerisms of her interview subjects. Kim views Smith’s performances as exemplary of the racial mundane, noting how the gaps between Smith’s embodiment of a racialized individual and the audience’s perception of that individual open up a space for critical reflection. There is a risk of reifying racial stereotypes—particularly in regards to Smith’s inability to completely replicate the accents of some of her Korean interview subjects. And yet, since perception of accuracy plays a critical role here, Kim notes how a possible “performance of racism” is situated “at the point of contact between reenactment and reception” (164), demonstrating once again that what specific bodies do only partially determines the meanings created when those behaviors are observed. What the author is most interested in when looking at both Kimchee and Chitlins and Twilight is how these performances cross perceived borders and the potential “relations of affiliation, influence, and accountability” (171) that can result from such crossings.

The book contains a handful of illustrations, including an image from a Michelle Phan makeup tutorial on YouTube that is paired with a fascinating discussion of how Phan—who is Asian American—transforms her facial features into the Disney cartoon character Mulan. Phan is shown applying dark makeup to the corners of her eyes as part of what Kim describes as a “painstaking process” to become Mulan, highlighting “the work created to become the character, despite a shared racial identification” (246). Moreover, since the tutorial is intended for all of Phan’s viewers regardless of racial identification, it demonstrates how the acquisition of quotidian skills (in this case, makeup application) can further destabilize ready assumptions about how race can be performed.

Other chapters in Kim’s book ruminate on cross-racial performances, assimilation, and the model minority myth by examining cultural works such as Thornton Wilder’s drama Our Town (1938), and how its claims towards universality are disrupted when non-white bodies perform it; Joy Kogawa’s novel Itsuka (1992), about the redress movement for survivors of Japanese internment in Canada; and Lauren Yee’s play Ching Chong Chinaman (2008), a satirical examination of upwardly mobile Asian Americans.

The book includes a helpful index, but does not have a separate bibliography section, instead listing out citations in endnotes. This allows Kim to not only acknowledge the books, scholarly articles, performances, films, and other reference matter that she utilizes, but to contextualize and/or elaborate upon how they fit into her argument. For example, she notes early on how the word “performance” is essential to her study, but that its usage in critical theory can lead to confusion, particularly when “performativity” (as articulated by theorists such as J.L. Austin and Judith Butler) is taken into account. Kim strives to be precise in her own word choices, and is apt to use terminology such as “theatrical performance” to designate specific kinds of cultural texts that she examines. She seems more skeptical of the term “performativity,” even as she invokes it in her discussion of the film Better Luck Tomorrow (2002), and particularly an early scene that appears to cite conventions of a normative national identity. However, Kim eventually decides against utilizing the interpretive lens of performativity for her analysis, instead finding more nuance in exploring how the model minority stereotype provides a “ready frame through which to see the characters’ behaviors” (189). It is not that performativity cannot be applied; it is more that Kim finds Butler’s articulation of it inadequate when trying to discuss the specificity of racialized assimilation. The author may be missing an opportunity here to forge connections between theories of behavior and performativity. However, the decision to foreground behavior follows a pattern within Kim’s book that connects everyday existence to performance and racialization as a way to more fully understand how Asian Americans are rendered legible in American society.

— Dan Bacalzo

The intersection of performance studies and Brazilian studies is still such a relatively neglected area that Performing Brazil should be considered an important contribution by its existence alone. On the performance studies side: among the limited books on Latin America, those that dedicate at least one chapter to Brazil are still the exception, while the equation of Latin America with Spanish-speaking countries is still the rule. On the Brazilian studies side: despite a recent spike in interest, in the majority of US universities Brazilian cultural studies is still treated as an afterthought within departments of Spanish and Portuguese. This dearth of resources stands in contrast to the prominent position of Brazil within the US cultural imaginary. As Severino J. Albuquerque and Kathryn Bishop-Sanchez point out in their introduction to the book, popular and Afro-Brazilian cultural expressions such as capoeira, samba, and carnival are well known to US audiences, as are a handful of recognizable Brazilian names, particularly in music and cinema. Brazilian studies in the United States is deeply tied to the specificities of its development within this country, and Performing Brazil should be read within this genealogy. The merit of the book, however, lies in its refusal to sit comfortably within the space that has been already carved out for Brazil both within Brazilian studies and within the US cultural imaginary.

Right from the first chapter, Bishop-Sanchez’s “On the (Im)possibility of Performing Brazil,” the tone is set by historicizing the parallel developments of Brazilianness, or brasilidade, and performance studies. Building upon Benedict Anderson’s preference for “nationness” over “nationality,” Bishop-Sanchez argues that Brazilianness—a concept she defines as “linked to the cultural representation of the nation and any performative re-creation of the broadly construed idea of Brazil” (17)—should be considered in light of the ways in which Brazilians have been called upon to perform nationness in the diaspora. This argument serves as a common thread throughout the book. Ana Paula Höfling, for example, writes about capoeira not by treating it as a natural outgrowth of Afro-Brazilian, but by examining how the very important yet underexplored Viva Bahia Group has negotiated the tensions between authenticity and modernity since the 1970s, both in Brazil and abroad. Her analysis of the contrast between the group’s claims to stylized modernity in their local productions and to natural authenticity in their international tours (both in the 1970s) underscores Viva Bahia’s conscious practice of molding performances of Brazilianness to each specific audience. Eric A. Galm also covers capoeira, but he does so by connecting the establishment of formal indoor training academies in the US to the waves of economic migrants beginning in the 1980s. Brazilianness is central to the way in which
he examines how the embodied practice of capoeira, as well as claims to its authenticity, were affected by the gradual replacement of Brazilian expatriates with US-born masters.

The black body in general, and the mulata in particular, occupies a prominent position within US Brazilian studies, a field marked by an ongoing debate on the suitability of applying US critical race theory to Brazil, given the historical differences in the formation of race relations between these two countries. Performing Brazil does not attempt to resolve this tension; rather, it thrives on it. Benjamin Legg challenges the ways in which the popularity of Sônia Braga has been either attributed to the place of the exotic Latina within the structures of identity politics in US cinema or to the problematic idealization of miscegenation within Brazilian cinema and telenovelas. Rather, Legg argues that Braga both “fulfills pre-established stereotypes for Latinas in North American culture” and “represents a Brazilian discourse on the importance of sexuality in the articulation of national identity” (203). In her thorough analysis of Grupo Corpo—one of the only Brazilian dance groups to have achieved recognition in the US—Cristina F. Rosa also takes into account the group’s complicated relationship to Brazilianness. On the one hand, she argues that the impact of Grupo Corpo’s choreographies in Brazil must be read within a crucial theme in the history of Brazilian dance: “the belief that formal European training in techniques such as ballet offer the only way to produce high-quality dancers” (71). On the other hand, she recognizes the central role that movements of hip syncopation have performed within exoticized representations of Brazil destined for international audiences. In her reading of the embodied dichotomy between the formal syntax of the ballet-trained body and the fluidity of Afro-Brazilian ginga, Rosa argues compellingly that “Grupo Corpo’s flickering oscillations among undulating torsos and straight legs, jiggling hands and pointed toes, and turned-out positions and loose hips work to replicate rather than resolve such epistemic frictions” (77).

Other staples of Brazilian cultural studies, such as the concept of anthropophagy or cultural cannibalism, are present in the volume, prominently in Fernando de Sousa Rocha’s analysis of “what Brazilians have actually kept as a remainder from antropofagia” (46). Another main character of Brazilian studies, Clarice Lispector, is featured in the only case study dedicated to literature, although in keeping with Performing Brazil’s stated objective, Maria José Somerlate Barbosa explores the “dramatic elements of [Lispector’s] creative endeavor” and “the frequent use of theatrical devices in her writing” (269). It is, however, in the balance between defamiliarizing the well known (capoeira, Sônia Braga, Grupo Corpo) and introducing lesser-known cultural expressions of Brazilianness, that Performing Brazil is at its best. The all-too-familiar topic of bossa nova, for example, is covered through Bryan McCann’s account of a very important yet seldom discussed figure—even within Brazilian circles: the harmonica player Maurício Einhorn. Carnaval is covered not in the context of the famous Rio de Janeiro parades, but through Annie McNeill Gibson’s essay about a small bloco of Brazilian immigrants who successfully infiltrated the New Orleans Mardi Gras. Alessandra Santos discusses the work of Arnaldo Antunes, an artist who is prominent in Brazil, yet instead of writing about Antunes’s much more established work as a poet and lyricist, Santos discusses the 1993 Nome (Name), a video art project that was part of the very early expressions of this genre in Brazil. Even the topic of Lidia Santos’s essay, the open-air sculpture Morrinho, created by young residents of the Morro do Pereirão favela in Rio de Janeiro, would not necessarily be considered a well-known work, despite being included in the 2007 Venice Biennale.

Simone Osthoff’s contribution is particularly productive in the book’s effort to defamiliarize the familiar. All too often, Brazilian artists who have circulated in international arenas—as political exiles, as participants in the commodified art markets, or because of other circumstances—are often presented as quintessential representatives of Brazilian art as practiced in Brazil. Music probably provides the most examples of this practice, since many musicians who are known in the US actually developed their careers as much in New York and London as in São Paulo, Salvador, or Rio de Janeiro. Augusto Boal, usually the most often quoted example of
Brazilian theatre, developed much of the theory and practice of his Theatre of the Oppressed in exile. This is also true of the visual arts, the field that Osthoff discusses in her essay, where the best-known names such as Ligia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, and Cildo Meireles became familiar in the art world after periods abroad or major exhibitions in US or European institutions. Osthoff shows how the work of international curators and critics both in international and Brazilian venues such as the São Paulo Biennale have shaped the reputation of these artists.

Performing Brazil is not, nor does it pretend to be, a Brazilian performance reader. As such, the scope of essays and case studies in the book is not particularly representative of the intersection of performance studies and Brazilian studies (there is not a single essay on theatre, for example). Rather, the selection is a product of an interdisciplinary conference organized by the editors at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 2007, as they clearly state in the introduction. Yet, given the excellent work of the editors and authors, it is much more than that, being quite broad in its scope, unconventional in the selection of cases, and consistent in exploring some of the threads that cross throughout the edited volume. One would be hard-pressed to find a better collection in the English language that explores the intersection between Brazilian studies and performance studies.

— Marcos Steuernagel

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Since its emergence in the 1980s, disability studies has traditionally focused on how dominant social practices create barriers for people with disabilities. This social model situates disability in the environment as opposed to a medical view that locates disability on the individual’s body as a biological flaw that needs to be cured, palliated, or eliminated. The social model and its political counterpart, the disability rights movement, have established disability as a minoritarian identity and culture shaped by oppression and advocacy. Most scholarly analysis of disability and the arts has therefore foregrounded this social construction, focusing on critical responses to marginalization and the affirmation of shared identity. At the same time, disability is not purely a social construction. Many among us have bodily and cognitive differences that do not fit into normate expectations of how we are to live and work. Disability studies has therefore counterbalanced
its social model, to a lesser extent, with a more recent examination of how disabled people’s impairments impact how they must navigate through spaces and institutions that remain significantly exclusionary.

David T. Mitchell and Sharon Snyder observe in *The Biopolitics of Disability* that neither of the critical approaches described above can fully address how different corporeal and cognitive realities afford disabled people embodied knowledge and lived experience that does not primarily stem from socially imposed restrictions and oppression. A purely political understanding of disability cannot account for disability’s critical and innovative contributions to the arts and culture. It is with this conceptual problem in mind that Mitchell and Snyder, in close conversation with Margrit Shildrick’s work on critical disability as radical materialism (1997, 2002, 2009), emphasize a third approach that they call a “nondialectical materialist account of disability” or “non-normative positivism” (5). This perspective moves beyond an understanding of disability as a product of social oppression to examine the alternative ways that some disabled people live creatively on the periphery of neoliberalism. Mitchell and Snyder argue that this is particularly important in nations such as the United States, whose efforts to increasingly include disabled people only apply to the exceptional “able-disabled,” the few who are able to approximate normate bodily appearance and behavior and satisfy neoliberalism’s demands of production and consumption (12). They note that such “inclusion” actually reinforces ableist notions of full citizenship by integrating this privileged minority into what remains an exclusive, normative environment. Such tokenism and rhetorics of benevolence that demonstrate US exceptionalism elide the continued exclusion of all who cannot meet neoliberal dictates. Such “ablenationalism” is one facet of our contemporary “biopolitics of disability,” the ubiquitous process of neoliberal management of individuals that regulates all of us into ideal “hyper-market-driven-identities” (10).

In order to critically address such homogenizing regulation and disenfranchisement in ways that move beyond the social/minority models of disability, Mitchell and Snyder engage with various interlocutors in queer, feminist, political, and critical race theory to reveal the parallel and intersectional concerns of disability with other aspects of neoliberal exclusion and disenfranchisement. They encourage us to embrace “cripistemologies,” Merri Lisa Johnson’s term for ways of knowing and rethinking disability from decentered crip/queer perspectives, embodiments, crises, and prohibited critical, social, and personal experiences (in Johnson and McRuer 2014). Drawing from Robert McRuer’s crip theory (2006), they observe that all disabled bodies are queer in the sense that they “represent discordant functionalities and outlaw sexualities” (3). Jasbir Puar’s model of homonalism (2007), in which members of “deviant” groups who are most willing and able to fetishize the norms of dominant communities are those who gain inclusion, in turn is extended to disability to inform the concept of “ablenationalism.” Mitchell and Snyder ultimately argue that disability plays a central, imbricated role in social justice and cultural production. They seek to counter neoliberal rhetorics of inclusion by considering how the failure and unwillingness to fit in the ableist classroom or any other aspect of the free-market economy can result in the “emergence of alternative strategies of non-normative living” that “better speak to the political dilemmas of embodied vulnerability” (77).

Mitchell and Snyder proceed to sample a variety of cultural production and social networks rooted in radical materiality. These include antinormative representations of disability in cinema and novels, disability film festivals, and an online network of patients and their advocates who discuss treatment options and promote research on a rare genealogical disorder that would otherwise garner little attention from market-driven medicine. This eclectic range of sites begins to demonstrate the broad reach of neoliberalism, ablenationalism, and subsequent locations of peripheral embodiment. In order to illustrate the interdependency of crip/queer subjects who are excluded from neoliberal spaces, Mitchell and Snyder offer a reading of John Schlesinger’s film *Midnight Cowboy* (1969). Protagonists Buck and Rico fail to achieve normative sexuality and ablebodiedness, and this failure ultimately allows them to care for each other.
They reveal and pool their meager resources, and learn to re-value one another. By pursuing a “minimally consumptive existence within surfeit supply of capitalism,” they “threaten to unseat heteronormative systems of embodied independence, productivity, and excessive consumption as the basis for neoliberal commodifications of value” (112). Another example of nonnormative positivist disability identity can be found in independent disability film festivals that continually increase inclusion and viewing accommodation for participants while refusing to categorize films by “disability type.” These festivals promote a “politics of atypicality” that calls attention to disability rights, representations, and material differences while networking with others, deconstructing binaries, and refusing stable categorization (130–35).

Addressing wide, interdisciplinary concerns, *The Biopolitics of Disability* sets its sights quite broadly. A lack of deep analysis in any single site is thus perhaps unavoidable. I therefore found *The Biopolitics of Disability* most useful in offering a conceptual approach to the materiality and creative potential of disability in today’s neoliberal world that cannot be achieved with the social and affirmative models of disability.

Matt Hargrave’s *Theatres of Learning Disability: Good, Bad, or Plain Ugly?* (2015) echoes Mitchell and Snyder’s call for a nonnormative positivism when analyzing disability in the arts. But by significantly narrowing his field of analysis to a handful of theatre productions, Hargrave is able to more fully examine the aesthetic and critical achievements of these sites of creative peripheral embodiment. The book offers a new poetics for exploring the complexity of theatre inclusive of artists with intellectual disabilities beyond paradigms of therapy or advocacy.

Rather than viewing disability as solely signifying pathology or as an oppressive social construction, Hargrave argues, disability should be seen as an integral part of the continuum of human diversity, one that can contribute critical and affective work both within and outside of mainstream theatre practice. Theatre that prominently includes intellectually disabled artists deserves to be assessed for its craft instead of evaluated by a limited social and qualitative assessment typically allotted to applied theatre. Drawing from Shildrick’s (2009) work on the fluid interconnectivity between disabled and nondisabled subjects and Tobin Siebers’s (2008) notion of “complex embodiment,” Hargrave demonstrates how mixed-ability theatre can produce innovative aesthetics by defamiliarizing and unsettling our perception of both performance and disability.

Similar to Mitchell and Snyder’s argument of how disability’s productive failure to meet neoliberal requirements of personhood gives rise to alternative critical and creative work, Hargrave considers how several learning disabled artists’ inability to satisfy mainstream expectations of acting can “make strange” and lay bare audience and nondisabled cast members’ normative assumptions about both the content and the forms of theatre. Accidents and unfamiliar affect, timing, and gestures can provide a “tactical complexity” that slows down an audience’s reading as well as adds meta-awareness of the proceedings (77). This complexity can be increased by postdramatic staging choices, such as those made by Australia’s Back to Back Theatre, which staged *Small Metal Objects* (2005) in various public spaces, such as a train station, where it wasn’t completely clear who was acting, who was a passerby, who was disabled, and who was not. By confounding easy interpretation and removing the aesthetic distance between art and prosaic reality, such productions can question the notions of both fixed identity and acting norms.
Hargrave addresses the UK-based Mind the Gap’s *On the Verge* (2005) to consider how disability encourages audiences to reconsider normative assumptions of authorship, intentionality, stable binary identities, and the myth of artistic independence. The one-person show features Jez Colborne, an actor and musician who shares his diagnosis of Williams syndrome, narrating his motorcycle journey across the US in the spirit of Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* (1957). The production ostensibly presents an unmediated actor as himself to the audience but actually offers a constructed persona of Colborne that reflects an intersubjective identity comprised of the actor and his fellow, nondisabled artists who contribute as playwright, videographer, and director. Through detailed description of the show’s structure and content, Hargrave convincingly demonstrates how the production unsettles assumptions about all autobiographical work, disabled or nondisabled, by defamiliarizing the experience of unmediated presence, typical expectations of how disabled actors are supposed to perform, and the concept of a single authorial voice.

Some of Hargrave’s argumentation, particularly his analysis of the Mind the Gap’s *Boo* (2009), an adaptation of Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) that features autistic actor Jonathan Ide in the central role of “Boo” Radley, relies on a psychoanalytic approach that may require patience or prior theoretical understanding in order to fully appreciate several of its points. But *Theatres of Learning Disability* is well-organized, clearly written, and carefully supported by disability theory, performance theory, and detailed evidence from chosen productions, including Hargrave’s own reactions to the work. I particularly appreciate how Hargrave doesn’t shy away from the ethical conundrums and anxieties of both the researcher and artist in figuring out how best to develop, present, and understand the contributions and challenges learning disability offers theatre practice. *Theatres of Learning Disability* is an important advancement in the underdeveloped field of disability and performance, effectively arguing how we can and must critically engage with disability art at the level of craft and aesthetics. Disability-inclusive theatre has clearly exceeded the limited realm of applied theatre and waits to be embraced for its creative and critical potential.

— Scott Wallin

References


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The Emergency Playscripts series is an innovative collection of volumes published by the Brooklyn collective Ugly Duckling Presse. Each of the five books published so far is concerned with the multiple dilemmas attached to the transcription of performance, choreography, and music, together with the theoretical and conceptual implications of text as the residue of an act. One of the series’ editors, Yelena Gluzman, in an afterword to the most recently published volume, Costume en Face: A Primer of Darkness for Young Boys and Girls, defines her aim as that of publishing performance texts “that lie outside conventional acts of notation” (139). The word “Emergency” in the series title, derived from the series’ origin in a now-defunct performance broadsheet, Emergency Gazette, perhaps implies (beyond evoking the taped vocal “transcripts” of urgent medical situations) a last-ditch effort to seize the traces of performance before they vanish. The series notably probes the uncertainties of authorship (such as that oscillating between choreographer and dancer) and its experimental forms that incorporate the many sources of performance and their transformation into the notation of gestures and words. Such preoccupations are present across the other four books so far published, among them Concertos (2011) by the No Collective and not knowing (2014) by Mike Taylor.

Costume en Face (2015) presents vital insights into the work processes of Tatsumi Hijikata (1928–1986), instigator in 1950s Japan of the ankoku butoh (dance of utter darkness) choreographic form. With its emphasis on imageries of vanishing and effacement, butoh paradoxically left multiple traces and archival materials, enough to fill to capacity an entire floor of a research center building of Keio University in Tokyo. Butoh has been an immense inspiration for many choreographers worldwide, especially since the 1980s, and access to Hijikata’s writings and to the documentation of his work constitutes a crucial aspect of that influence. Costume en Face is the first publication in English of a document drawn from Hijikata’s idiosyncratic working method.

From his work’s beginnings in 1959 until shortly before his death, Hijikata was extensively involved in the medium of film, notably through collaborations across the 1960s with experimental filmmakers such as Takahiko Iimura and Donald Richie, and through acting roles in commercial Japanese horror cinema. He also collaborated with young Japanese photographers in an era of considerable innovation in that medium, undertaking Kamaitachi (Sickle Weasel; 1965–68), a long-term project with the photographer Eikoh Hosoe that was focused on outdoor dance actions in the landscapes of Japan’s remote Akita region and was eventually published as a large-format album. As a result of its relative accessibility, Hijikata’s work in film and photography has often been the pre-eminent source of direct engagement with his work, in Japan as well as in the US and Europe.
Hijikata’s writings, by contrast, offer a far more demanding experience for their audiences, as well as for their translators. Hijikata’s work entails an extreme resistance to processes of representation and to coherent legibility. Since the publication in book form in 1983 of Hijikata’s sole extended piece of written work—a evocation of his childhood in Akita, *Yameru Maihime (Ailing Dancer)*—a number of English-language translators have attempted to render it, without success. The *TDR* special-issue section *Tatsumi Hijikata: The Words of Butoh* (T165, Spring 2000) remains the most comprehensive set of English-language translation extracts from Hijikata’s body of writings published to date. The present translation by Sawako Nakayasu (who won the 2016 PEN Award for Poetry in Translation for her work on another book), for which she consulted archival manuscripts and interviews, engages with the processes and documents of Hijikata’s work, in the form of a notebook transcription by one member of Hijikata’s company, Moe Yamamoto, of the cryptic instructions Hijikata gave him in preparing for a 1976 performance, *Costume en Face*. Issues of authorship and interpretation are always at stake in the representation and transcription of Hijikata’s work, especially from the mid-1970s, when he began to instruct his students to take extensive notes during his improvised choreographic teaching.

In its focus on Hijikata’s working methods and the status of their written traces in notebooks and other documents, Nakayasu’s translation explores a terrain parallel to that of the prominent US artist/curator Richard Hawkins, who exhibited a research project he conducted into Hijikata’s use of large-format scrapbooks as a working method for his choreography, highlighting in particular Hijikata’s sources in Japanese and European Surrealism, as well as his engagement with French and German figurative art of the 1940s and 1950s, such as the work of Jean Fautrier and Hans Bellmer. Hawkins’s project, *Hijikata Twist*, was exhibited in 2014–15 in major art galleries and museums, such as the Tate Liverpool in the UK, thereby exposing Hijikata’s work to large-scale public audiences. *Costume en Face*, by contrast, is primarily a performance research publication, investigating the oscillating status of performance transcription—often as much the work of the transcriber, auditor, or collagist as the text’s originator. It is this oscillation that forms a guiding preoccupation of the Emergency Playscripts series.

The director of Keio University’s Hijikata archive, Takeshi Morishita, provides an illuminating introduction and commentary on the notebook whose content is transcribed and translated for *Costume en Face* in an intricate typographical design that replicates the arrangement of words and drawings of the original. Morishita emphasizes the contrast between Hijikata’s “strict choreographic method” (129), which allowed for no degree of improvisation or autonomy on the part of the dancer, and the “arbitrariness” (9) and intentional opacity of his instructions, which combined voicing his own grotesque fragments of dense poetry with showing Yamamoto reproductions of artworks such as those by Bellmer and Fautrier. The resulting transcription—“a frantic scribbling of notes” (13) in response to Hijikata’s voice and gestures, as Nakayasu describes it in her own commentary—generated an enigmatic “code” (13), which Yamamoto was then expected to perform through several hundred dance movements.

Morishita’s commentary and Nakayasu’s translation both draw on interviews with Yamamoto, who evidently faced acute difficulties in carrying through Hijikata’s choreography. At one point, his transcription of Hijikata’s vocal instructions results in the phrase: “Grapple with the movements of each fragment” (17). He decided to leave Hijikata’s company shortly after
the performance. The volume evokes the obstinate resistance to legibility and coherence in Hijikata’s work; Morishita laments that Hijikata’s death precludes any attempt by researchers to ask him to explicate his work, but also wryly notes that such an approach would, in any case, prove counterproductive: “It is not hard to imagine that it might even increase the confusion” (9).

The reader of Costume en Face is confronted with a dense, outlandish poetry of disintegrating bodies, which, in itself, may constitute valuable raw material for choreographers envisaging how to perform butoh in contemporary environments. In the Keio University archive, Yamamoto’s notebook of transcriptions of Hijikata’s instructions is accompanied by a surviving film of the actual 1976 performance in Hijikata’s studio, along with the scrapbook in which Hijikata had amassed cut-out reproductions of the artworks that he showed to Yamamoto as part of his choreographic process. In their future digitized format, planned by the archive’s directors, those three archival records of the performance, in their disparate media, could be amalgamated to form a document articulating the complexity and depth of Hijikata’s approach to choreography.

Among the other volumes in the Emergency Playscripts series, Taylor’s publication not knowing is also concerned with the arbitrariness and abrupt shifts of transcription. not knowing was performed over three evenings at The Kitchen in New York in June 2009, and the text shares with Costume en Face a concentration on the fragmentary and grotesque, but with a far more uproarious tone, in Taylor’s mangled welding via comedy routines of the plots of Henrik Ibsen’s The Wild Duck (1884) and László Benedek’s film starring Marlon Brando, The Wild One (1953). Much of the original production consisted of filmic elements shot especially for the performances, and the publication raises the issue of the contrary means by which moving-image media and live action are rendered into the form of text, in their transcription and accentuation. At one point in the action’s transcription, Taylor (who also works as a documentary filmmaker) writes: “THE PSYCHIATRIST (Gregor) appears onscreen. He’s 20 feet tall and wearing a really nice suit.” In a succinct footnote, Taylor adds: “We used videotape” (56).

The No Collective piece, Concertos, was first performed in Tokyo in 2008, by the Japanese participants of that prominent international collective — founded by the artist You Nakai — who have presented work at the borders of music composition and performance art at such venues as Tokyo’s Museum of Modern Art. Concertos was then reworked as a transcript by other members of the Collective. The performance piece appears to have an ongoing existence in the Collective’s repertoire, extending beyond the published volume of 2011, and has been performed with variations on at least four occasions, most recently in 2012. The original performance, consisting of 3 “movements,” each 18 minutes in duration, entailed animal as well as human participants, including interventions by a dog and a bird (the dog having been obtained from a “rental pet shop” [15], and the pigeon caught with a net, according to the transcript). The account of the performance on the Collective’s website records: “Feedback is produced between the contact microphone attached to the pigeon and the mobile speaker attached to the dog” (http://nocollective.com/c1.html).

The published volume of Concertos experiments with the duplicities and multiplicities of transcription, while signaling too the enduring influence that Hijikata’s work exerts in Japan beyond dance, extending widely into contemporary art, music, film, and theatre. Concertos works both as a performance record, in its transcription of the participants discussing their memories of the performance, and also as an imaginative reflection on the performance itself: “People say ears don’t have lids, unlike eyes. But ears will open and close selectively, unlike eyes which seem incapable of selection” (9). The Collective’s participants appear keen to reinforce the elements of malfunction and disarray integral to their performance, recasting its ending as an extended suspension: “Then, after packing all the equipments, drinking, lamenting everything that went wrong, you have an INTERMISSION of eighteen months” (33).

The contemporary life of Hijikata’s work — as an active entity that continues to inspire choreographers, artists, and audiences worldwide — is closely bound up with the many forms
of dance’s transcription, representation, documentation, recording, and adaptation: all pro-
cesses of intermediation that Hijikata himself viewed with profound unease and even oppo-
sition. In its meticulous rendering of one manifestation of Hijikata’s working method, the
translation of Costume en Face — together with the other volumes in the Emergency Playscripts
series — valuably interrogates the slippages and dilemmas at play between word and gesture,
between performance and its residues.

— Stephen Barber

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recent book is Performance Projections (Reaktion Books, 2014). stephen.barber@kingston.ac.uk

More Books

Isadora Duncan in the 21st Century: Capturing the Art and Spirit of the
illustrations. $40.00 paper.

Andrea Mantell Seidel’s work is the culmination of a career’s worth of embodied research on
Isadora Duncan. Equal parts memoir, pedagogical manual, and historiographical study, the
book explores the nature of “re/constructing” the ineffable quality of Duncan’s choreography
(23). Seidel cautions readers not to treat the book as a “how-to” manual. Instead, she encour-
gages dancers, choreographers, and teachers to use the book as a means to tap into the psycho-
logical and philosophical dimensions of transmitting Duncan’s technique, in order to ensure
the continuation of the ethos and methods of Duncan’s work in the 21st century. Using dances
passed on and adapted by Irma and Anna Duncan, Julia Levien, and Hortense Kooluris, the first
half of the book leads readers through Duncan’s aesthetic principles and how to teach them.
In the subsequent chapters, Seidel examines what is required (spiritually and thematically) in
the restaging of Duncan’s choreographic repertoire, from the lyrical Ave Maria (1914) to the
ecstatic Bacchanal (c. 1903) and the triumphant Dances from Revolutionary Russia (c. 1923). The
book gives an important analysis of Duncan’s place in modern dance. Additionally, its stories
enliven Duncan’s theories through the eyes of a practitioner, providing an illuminating resource
for dance and performance scholars.

Remapping Performance: Common Ground, Uncommon Partners. By Jan
Cohen-Cruz. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015; 240 pp; illustrations. $90.00 cloth; $29.00
paper; e-book available.

Jan Cohen-Cruz analyzes unconventional partnerships between artists, educators, and commu-
nity organizers who share like-minded social concerns, such as civil rights and antipoverty ini-
tiatives. She largely focuses on partnerships that take place outside of performance contexts
Books

(196) to explore how both parties can help one another through transdisciplinary collaboration. Her book also challenges readers to consider social advocacy as a type of performance. Engaging with politicians and community leaders, the artist performs the role of intermediary. His or her outreach becomes an extension of the artist’s performance practice. The metaphor of “remapping” takes two forms in the book: first, it describes the growing trend of artists who cross boundaries that delimit their work as “either social or aesthetic” in order to graph it as “social and aesthetic”; second, it indicates Cohen-Cruz’s interest in artists who have a “strong sense of place” when establishing partnerships outside the artistic sector (18). Uniquely, Cohen-Cruz illuminates her study by including companion pieces after each chapter written by experts in complimentary fields, such as social psychology, community planning, and applied theatre, including Nancy Cantor, Maria Rosario Jackson, Julie Thompson Klein, Todd London, Helen Nicholson, and Penny M. Von Eschen. The book demonstrates how essential these collaborations are in grounding the role of arts in the community and provides ways to ensure the future integration of performance practices in social contexts.


Editors Rachel E. Dubrofsky and Shoshana Amielle Magnet proclaim that this edited collection “formally launches the area of feminist surveillance studies” (1). Adopting a broad definition of surveillance that includes any technology used to collect and categorize information, the authors adopt a feminist praxis, geared towards enumerating how monitoring technologies perpetuate sexist, racist, and heteronormative systems of power. Each of the 11 chapters deals to some extent with themes of “seeing” and “non-seeing.” The sampling maintains a critical focus while exhibiting breadth, surveying a variety of information-gathering sites. For example, Lisa Jean Moore and Paisley Currah illustrate the way birth certificates link the body to state-recognized gender constructions; Kelli D. Moore discusses how police photographs of battered women reveal women of color and their injuries in different ways than white women; and Rachel Hall critiques full-body scanners as outing devices and, therefore, as threatening to transgendered individuals. These examples accompany a plethora of deft studies including (but not limited to) historical practices of surveillance of indigenous women, genetic screening and reproductive science, and the celebrity-use of Twitter accounts. The book provides a strong representation of methodologies that may engender many more surveillance studies using a feminist framework.


Charlotte Canning’s lucid and complex exploration of internationalism in US theatre examines the interrelation of three trends during the 20th century: (1) the establishment of US theatre as an important cultural form; (2) the nation’s concern with its international influence; and (3) the utopian goals of artists to draw affective connections across national borders. Canning starts at the end of World War I and concludes with the formation of the National Endowment of the Arts in 1965. She documents the establishment of three institutions—the journal Theatre Arts,
the American National Theatre and Academy, and the International Theatre Institute—which sought to strengthen US theatre in order to bolster its global influence. Cleverly, she interlaces these with studies on specific productions that advanced the US’s geopolitical identity, such as Hallie Flanagan’s direction of Anton Chekhov’s *The Proposal* (1927), the 1949 US production of *Hamlet*, and the international tour of *Porgy and Bess* between 1952 and 1956. In so doing, Canning illustrates how the nation-state’s agendas manifested institutionally and, in turn, found expression in individual theatrical productions. The prose is detailed and enlivened with anecdotes, which Canning uses to measure the ideological pulse of the US theatre in a dramatic and illuminating fashion.

*The Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary South African Theatre.* Edited by Martin Middeke, Peter Paul Schnierer, and Greg Homann. London: Bloomsbury, 2015; 392 pp. $120.00 cloth; $39.95 paper; e-book available.

Following similar compendiums on other countries, such as Britain, Ireland, and the United States, *The Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary South African Theatre* surveys over 100 dramatists and plays from democratic South Africa. The editors organize the first chapters according to particular modes of playmaking. Some look at collaborative agencies, such as the Handspring Puppet Company, The Magnet Theatre, and two community theatre groups. Other chapters examine the country’s prominent examples of physical theatre and one-person formats, including the “monopolylogue,” in which one actor plays multiple roles. The second half of the book treats 12 playwrights individually, including Athol Fugard, Reza de Wet, and Yaël Farber. The book chronicles a transition in South African theatre, from predominantly agit-prop protest to a new breed of dialogic theatre emphasizing community, debate, and plurality. As such, it shows how the South African theatre increasingly embraces fluidity of structure and celebrates intermediality (mixing European drama with music, dance, and oral performance). Many of the plays mentioned in the text also experiment with multilingualism, juxtaposing the country’s 11 official languages as separate, cohabitating expressions of national identity. The book offers a succinct contextualization of this complicated theatrical climate, presenting a strong introduction to South African theatre.


Mary Mazzilli accomplishes a thorough study of an overlooked, yet significant Chinese dramatist, Gao Xingjian. Widespread acknowledgment of his work, she believes, has been limited due to both an attempt to connect Gao to his “Chineseness” and a comparison of his style to the historical avantgarde. Diverging from these modes, Mazzilli situates Gao’s post-exile oeuvre in the context of contemporary playwrights, comparing it to plays by Martin Crimp, Peter Handke, and Elfriede Jelinek. Furthermore, by building from the theoretical work of Hans-Thies Lehmann and Elinor Fuchs, Mazzilli coins the term “postdramatic transnationalism” to demonstrate how Gao’s dramatic work at once transcends national identity, celebrates individuality, and reasserts the inseparable connection between the European experimental tradition and Chinese forms, such as Peking Opera. In the exploration of his post-exile plays—*The Other Shore* (1987), *Between Life and Death* (1991), *Dialogue and Rebuttal* (1992), *Nocturnal Wanderer* (1993), *Weekend Quartet* (1995), *Snow in August* (1997), *Death Collector* (2000), and *Ballade*
Nocturne (2010)—Mazzilli provides a deft analysis of Gao’s self-referentiality, manipulation of the actor character dynamic, and hybrid structures (including opera, dance, and physical theatre), offering an important study of this singular dramatist.

—Matthew McMahan

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