

Book Reviews

***Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* by Shannon Jackson**

London: Routledge, 2011, 299 pp. (softback)

By Poppy Spowage (People's Palace Projects)

Shannon Jackson's account of the recent 'social turn' contributes to an evolving conversation around what socially engaged theatre work can do and how it does it. Jackson collapses the boundaries between contemporary, socially engaged and participatory performance, the premise being that all performance is social. *Social Works* tackles this thesis by revealing the mixed social, political, institutional and aesthetic economies that support performance and engage different publics with the practice. At a time of economic, political and social change, the field of socially engaged performance has to respond to the pressing task of finding alternative ways of articulating the value of aesthetic projects. *Social Works* offers a refreshing and rigorous take on performance practice, at a time when much critical theory has established oppositional relationships between the social and the aesthetic, the effective and the affective.

Approaching performance 'as a site of group coordination in space and over time,' Jackson distances the term 'social works' from a discourse of care (3). Using an array of examples, mainly from the field of visual art and contemporary performance, she treats all performance as 'social work.' In this way, Jackson destabilises hierarchies that exist between applied and contemporary performance, in both research and in practice. This interdisciplinary approach to performance, theory and research aims to unsettle

‘some of the binary frames that many use to judge both social efficacy and aesthetic legitimacy’ (45).

Littered with lively examples, and following a logical trajectory, each chapter explores a different element that supports performance practice, be that aesthetic, institutional, technological, political, social or economic. Jackson’s approach reveals that artistic endeavours are always supported by multiple systems: public/private, aesthetic/social, independent/institutional. *Social Work*’s exploration of these overlapping and interdependent systems concludes that all performance practice engages publics to some degree. Jackson’s study of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, offers a particularly effective example of the interdependent systems that support practice. Jackson describes how Ukeles took to creating large inflatable structures, detaching herself from the spatial and temporal constraints of traditional artistic institutions. To create these large structures, Ukeles worked in heat-sealing factories in New York and Philadelphia. Jackson demonstrates how Ukeles’ ‘quest for independent art forms [produced] new forms of dependency, dependencies upon labour, expertise and resistant material’ (85). Using examples from throughout Ukeles’ career, *Social Works* asks its readers to consider public and private, social and aesthetic, life and performance worlds as complex, overlapping and competing.

Jackson illuminates inherent tensions between artistic practice and critical theory. Her premise is that ‘if our critical language only values agency when it is resisting state structure, then we can find ourselves in an awkward position when we also want to call for the renewal of public institutions’ (9). Jackson revisits old arguments but offers a fresh perspective on theoretical debates, such as the discussion between Claire Bishop

and Grant Kester in *Art Forum* (2006), which explores the ethics of community performance. For example, using the work of Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset, Jackson unpacks Bishop's assertion that critics should be concerned 'about art within state-based structures of instrumentalization that receive "prioritised government funding" rather than art staged in "the relatively neutral or staged confines of a gallery space"' (195). Elmgreen and Dragset's collaborative performance/installation works, which have been predominantly located in a 'relatively neutral' gallery space, illuminate how public and private support structures interact. Elmgreen and Dragset's pieces – which include *Social Mobility* (2005), *Reg(u)arding the Guards* (2005) and *The Welfare Show* (2005-6) – 'make clear their discontent with welfare principles' (194). Yet, as artists who have relied on social welfare, Jackson reveals how Elmgreen and Dragset's aesthetic and artistic flexibility was supported by the system of public security that their work critiques.

As Jackson examines the 'paradoxes around artistic privacy and publicity, private funding and public funding' throughout *Social Works*, 'it becomes clear that art-making as a supported and supporting apparatus is also in need of a third way – perhaps several third ways – to respond to art's heterogeneous mixed economies' (27). In her final chapter, Jackson offers Paul Chan's *Waiting for Godot New Orleans* (2006) as an alternative approach to performance practice. Jackson argues that Chan's project embraced mixed public/private, aesthetic/social, and independent/institution economies to its benefit: 'Not a project that chose between private or public sponsorship or made its case for either capitalism or socialism, *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans* mobilized within an economy that remains decidedly mixed' (236). Chan's project had three parts:

social engagement, a provocative aesthetic encounter and the support of both private and public sponsorship. Jackson uses *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans* to demonstrate that it was Chan's ability to exploit these interdependent support systems that enabled the project to mobilise the public in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans.

Arts in the UK and the US are experiencing public-expenditure cuts and being encouraged to utilise philanthropic support systems. Jackson offers a timely intervention: performance is presented as an 'art of "interpublic coordination," and as such, a reminder that no one can ever fully go it alone' (9). Chan's *Waiting for Godot New Orleans* is presented as an example of an alternative way of approaching performance practice. To a degree, Jackson creates a bridge between explicitly socially engaged practice and contemporary performance. However, as a renowned contemporary artist, Chan's work remains situated in a contemporary art world. It would be insightful to see Jackson's thesis explored across a wider array of performance genres and draw on examples from community or mainstream performance.

One support system in *Social Works* that lies unexplored is documentation. Texts, evaluation, reports and critical theory play a huge role in supporting artistic practice. In a time of fiscal restraint, it is urgent that artists and organisations, as well as theorists, find alternative ways of accounting for the artistic and social value of performance. It seems *Social Works* might only be the beginning of a more complex and sophisticated means of accounting for the ways in which performance engages publics.

Jackson's study provides a convincing and fresh perspective on the mutually dependent relationship between art and publics, and is a useful and provocative text for academics, researchers and students. *Social Works* acknowledges the systems that support

practice and often remain unexamined. Yet, in a time of social, economic and political change, scope remains as to why and how such an approach to performance could be useful for theorists, artists and publics. Theoretically, *Social Works* ‘challenges strict divisions about where the arts ends and the rest of the world begins’ (15), but the dense and heavily populated prose leaves the boundaries between critical theory and the rest of the world firmly intact.

***Voice Onstage and Off*, 2nd Ed. by Robert Barton and Rocco Dal Verra**

London: Routledge, 2011, 429 pp. (softback)

By Konstantinos Thomaidis (Royal Holloway, University of London)

Any fair review of Barton and Dal Vera’s second edition of *Voice: Onstage and Off* for the readership of an academic journal must be a balancing act between the explicit purposes of the book at hand and the enquiries that can be posed to it by a scholarly milieu. In other words, if one is to recommend this invaluable work, not only to practitioners, but also to theorists of the vocal phenomenon, then one also has to unearth the connections between the practices promoted by the authors and their correspondent critical frameworks.

Barton and Dal Vera have produced a refreshing revision of the already popular first edition of *Voice* (1995). Grounded in years of professional experience, the book is openly designed for an audience of practitioners. Drafting an almost encyclopedic overview of the predominant pedagogy, the authors admit in their preface that the ‘purpose of this book is to wade through what is out there to make sense, connect,

simplify, alleviate fears, and help the reader to become a better shopper' (xxvi). Following this premise, the ensuing chapters do not claim to mould a new training regime; rather, they deal with such fundamentals of voice training as the discovery of one's personal vocal profile, the remediation and fine-tuning of the vocal instrument, language elevation, and the 'planning of your voice future' (394).

The new edition manages to accommodate the needs of students from diverse backgrounds who mostly tend to prioritize distinct learning modalities: the auditory, the visual or the kinesthetic. Throughout the book the reader is encouraged to experiment with technological equipment, ranging from simple recorders to software for spectograms (123) or a small home studio (413). For the visual learners, four cartoon figures, the voice cook, the voice shrink, the voice doc and the voice coach, annotate the material with colourful tips. The same style of learning is facilitated by a frequent use of tables, offering key advice on classical speech (290-97), geographic accent sources (316-19), or commercial demo examples (338-39). Similarly, albeit not as frequently, students are invited to incorporate physicality in their vocal drills, including their warm-up (40-45), yoga-inspired resonance exercises (126-28), and breathing patterns extrapolated from *Alba Emoting* (217-24). A companion website has replaced the CD which once accompanied the volume. Although currently under construction, the website will provide access to demos, audio examples and downloadable forms – its interactive character making the book equally suitable for in-class explorations as well as for private study.

Employing a succinct and reassuring tone, the book fully conveys Barton and Dal Vera's teaching ethics, an ethics of light-hearted depth. While acknowledging the daunting nature of voice-related shifts and the dedicated effort required from the trainee,

the authors encourage change and monitoring of progress through a relaxed and humorous stance. For instance, actors are advised to face nasality by naming it Nadine (the 'N' sound directly alluding to the unresolved problem) and checking if she's 'still here, still uninvited' (400). Likewise, when transferring the state of relaxation and alignment from floor exercises to standing, the students are reminded that: '[y]ou can't spend your career on your back (unless you change careers)' (406). This consciously playful attitude goes hand in hand with deep knowledge: nasality and alignment in these instances are treated with clarity and detail, but within a framework of playfulness fears can be alleviated, preconceptions eradicated and fresh methodologies tested in practice.

In addition to its unquestionable usefulness for all those involved in theatre making, the frequent pointing to other directions in voice literature showcases an ethos of generous inclusiveness (see, among others, the lists on pronouncing dictionaries (179-80), accents resources (313-15), and voice-over resources (348-51)). In this strand, it is Chapter 7, 'Selecting your system' (357-93), which is revelatory of the writers' intentions and the breadth of their research. This section constitutes a broad overview of the five cornerstones of modern conservatory speech training: Edith Skinner, Arthur Lessac, Cicely Berry, Kristin Linklater and Patsy Rodenberg (358-81). The backbone of their teaching and the nucleus of their ideas are cross-examined and even displayed in comparative tables (374-81).

It is here that I think the potential academic interest in the book lies, since this section can be used as a lens through which one might dissect how UK/USA pedagogy understands the relation of voice to the body. In the work of these prominent figures, the voice is understood as affected by the intimate connection between the physicality of the

trainee and their psyche (Berry 11-17; Linklater 7-11; Lessac 13-17; Rodenburg 3-15). The teachers' task is to facilitate a process of *deconstruction*. Put differently, they work with this basic principle in mind: growing up in the West is a process of dis-connection from one's body and disengagement from the self. This becomes obvious in the limits and tensions one considers as inherent in one's voice. For these pedagogues, training should therefore be a process of doing away with cultural encrustations, through initial isolation of the bodily mechanisms involved in voicing and the well-respected remedies of relaxation and effortlessness.

This scenario also forms the backdrop to *Voice*. A 'from psychological blocks to the efficient use of the self' formula underpins the entire chapter on healing (184-84) and is encapsulated in several other parts of the book (see 6-10, 184, 300). In reviewing the marked achievements of the most widely employed pedagogies, Barton and Dal Vera's book almost begs the questions: what if we change the underpinning scenario? What if we avoid the notion of blocks altogether? What if we do not aim at an efficient body/voice, but at an exhausted or excessive body/voice (as in the paradigms of Grotowski and Staniewski's lineages)? This is by no means to imply that Barton and Dal Vera's methods are not perfectly suited to the exigencies of the current theatre marketplace; to the contrary, as a performer, I have already inserted some of their ideas into my everyday training repertoire and, as a teacher, I foresee their validity in the classroom. On top of that, and not in opposition to that, as an academic, I see *Voice* as a crucial point of departure towards a re-imagining and re-examining of how we work as pedagogues and what critical discourses inform our choices.

Before concluding, let me re-iterate: there is a fine line between what the book proposes and what a scholar can make of it when researching the complex territory occupied by both practice and critical thinking. As to the exclusive realm of speech training, Barton and Dal Vera's book is one of the most rounded and inspiring contributions to the field. What is more, they make the case that the book is only the first stop of a 'lifelong journey' (395). Despite their accomplished analysis of all major aspects of vocal work and their comprehensive classroom and DIY suggestions, the authors rightly insist on presenting their textbook as the very beginning of an ongoing engagement with the professional voice. And as such, it is a thoroughly recommendable place to start.

Works Cited

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***Performance Theatre and the Poetics of Failure: Forced Entertainment, Goat Island, Elevator Repair Service* by Sara Jane Bailes**

London; New York: Routledge, 2011, 228 pp. (hardback)

By Karen Quigley (University of Chester)

The idea of a 'poetics of failure' found me thinking about Bob Dylan's 'Love Minus Zero/No Limit.' In this song, written in 1965, Dylan warns us that 'there's no success like failure,' and this could be an interesting epigraph to Sara Jane Bailes' new monograph. *Performance Theatre and the Poetics of Failure: Forced Entertainment, Goat Island, Elevator Repair Service* sits easily alongside an emerging body of (successful) performance studies practice and scholarship that could be thought about in terms of failure studies. Exploring various aporia of theatre and performance, theorists and practitioners have been making a success of failure, as it were, carving out new ways of thinking about (among other things) the slippages between audience (and performer) expectations and what actually ends up happening on the stage. Bailes' work makes an interesting contribution to this discourse, discussing three 'performance theatre' companies of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries with an appealing synthesis of theoretical exploration and practical experience.

Following an introduction in which she clearly outlines her definition of 'performance theatre' (which, for Bailes, combines the self-awareness and un-representability of performance art with the imaginative worlds and ensemble work of stage drama) and discusses established notions of the failure of representation (influenced largely by the work of Samuel Beckett in the mid-twentieth century), Bailes looks at the

invisibility of labour in professional theatre, the capitalist commodification drive of (mostly) mainstream theatre, and the question of where a poetics of failure could situate itself in relation to these ideas. Using an interesting theoretical encounter between Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin, and employing punk and slapstick as initial examples, Bailes discusses the ways in which an intentional practice of and discourse on failure can operate politically, resisting conventional representations of the world and brushing against the grain of commercial success by which achievement is so often measured.

To bolster her accomplished and detailed analysis of Forced Entertainment's work since its formation in 1984, Bailes discusses at length the political and social climate of 1980s Britain and the politics of Margaret Thatcher, who envisaged for citizens 'a culture of winners,' in which 'everyone else – the losers one supposes – was destined to sink to the bottom' (81). Amongst others, Forced Entertainment's devices of showcasing the labour of performance, exploring the 'exhaustion of possibility within a technique' (77) and spotlighting the figure of the (in this case intentional) amateur performer, helped in inventing worlds outside of Thatcher's ideal.

The chapter on Goat Island focuses mostly on the idea of the impossible, a recurring theme in the group's work, in which '[o]ne not only imagines the impossible; one begins to *make* it' (111). Via a discussion of Ernst Bloch's idea of 'possibiliz[ing] the possible,' Bailes examines the group's aim 'to perform activities and tasks that from the outset appear difficult to accomplish within the temporal and spatial limitations of live performance' (112), by using a variety of techniques that push the physical, spatial and temporal limits of performance in new directions.

The work of Elevator Repair Service explores issues of translation across forms and formal genres, as well as the idea of the accidental and the obstacle. For this group, whose recent work has included the staging of various literary works (in their entirety) from F. Scott Fitzgerald to William Faulkner, the ‘discoverability of theatre’ is paramount (149). The exploration of ways in which the literary imagination can translate to the public spectacle of theatre is undertaken through a discussion of music theorist Edwin Prévost’s notion of ‘dislocatory practice.’ This idea privileges the unanticipated and the dislocated use of the body or the text in artistic production, and asserts ‘awkwardness...as a new kind of competency’ (152). The practice creates obstacles for the performers, a sort of failing representation which engenders ‘a desire...to grow out of it and to make something with it’ (152).

Performance Theatre and the Poetics of Failure provides an interesting and informative study, both of the work of the three companies explored and of Bailes’ central thesis: questioning the value of ‘successful’ representation and suggesting other avenues of exploration. Her mixed methodology, combining philosophical and theoretical analysis with her observations of the companies at work in the rehearsal room, is both engaged and engaging. However, a recurring thought is that the very word ‘failure’ begins to do less and less work for Bailes as a central term as the book continues. I am creating broad and generalised thematic brushstrokes of her often deft and delicate thesis, but the discussion of Goat Island’s ‘impossibility’ and Elevator Repair Service’s ‘awkwardness’ caused me to question how well the word ‘failure’ functions here. It is made clear that Forced Entertainment explore the failure of representation, the failure of the performance to conform to expectations, and the failure to accomplish. However, I

remain unconvinced that ‘failure’ is a useful umbrella term under which to gather such diverse concepts as impossibility and awkwardness in performance theatre. Perhaps, as all three are used for their individual merits within their respective case study chapters, an additional, more overarching term or concept could have been found with which to draw the three together more tidily.

Additionally, in her discussion of Forced Entertainment, Bailes speculates that ‘[b]y opening up a discussion of failure, one can begin to interrogate rather than deny the difficulty of stage representation’ (12). Aligning this with Forced Entertainment’s style of ‘exposing the artificiality of the theatre predicament’ (69), she begins to create a poetics of failure that, for me, is sometimes lacking in her discussion of the other two companies’ work, well-informed and well-written though it is. Nevertheless, the fact that the English company continues to enjoy significant commercial and critical success at home and abroad rather jars with Bailes’ previous framing of these ‘performance theatre’ companies as anti-hegemonic and even anti-capitalist. She wisely steers the argument away from these economic matters, focusing instead on her thesis of aesthetics, technique, and therefore the idea that ‘[a]s theatre fails, it negotiates the conditions of production so that failure surfaces as an alternative way of playing the game’ (77). Be that as it may, the commercial triumph of this company that, for Bailes, ‘runs on the energy of undoing its own objective’ (70) cannot but send me back, for a moment, to 1965. Dylan follows up the line ‘there’s no success like failure’ with ‘and failure’s no success at all’. He should keep an eye on the ticket sales for Forced Entertainment’s next tour.

***William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography: It Starts From Any Point* edited
by Steven Spier**

London: Routledge, 2011, 186 pp. (softback)

By Tamara Tomic-Vajagic (University of Roehampton)

Steven Spier's recently published (and long awaited) book, *William Forsythe and the Practice of Choreography*, covers a range of themes allowing for deeper understanding of the choreographer's multifaceted artistic practice. Owing to the editor's subtle approach to structuring, the collection of articles is put together in a way that allows the reader to roam through Forsythe's world, gently guided by a network of sophisticated thematic threads. Written by several key analysts of the choreographer's pursuits, the range of articles provides an extensive insight into Forsythe's investigations of choreography as an organisational operation, his (dis)engagement with the ballet as a form of movement language, and the extensions of these core principles as found throughout his practice.

Since his artistic breakthroughs in mid-1970s and early 1980s, much has been written about Forsythe as a key contemporary choreographer, but Spier's publication is the first scholarly collection to be published in English. Until this compilation, the most important volume was a special issue of the journal *Choreography and Dance*, edited in 2000 by Senta Driver, published during Forsythe's Ballett Frankfurt era. Spier's book follows after more than a decade, and since then significant shifts have occurred in Forsythe's practice, not least in his dance institution (Ballett Frankfurt folded in 2004, and The Forsythe Company was established in 2005). Due perhaps to the anticipation created by this wait, a first glance at Spier's table of contents seems somewhat

anticlimactic – out of twelve articles, five have been published elsewhere in English already. These include Forsythe’s own analytical piece ‘Choreographic Objects,’ published on two websites¹ as well as in the recent catalogue for Hayward Gallery’s exhibition *Move: Choreographing You*, curated by Stephanie Rosenthal. For the reader, it is unclear whether the number of reprinted articles is the result of a long publishing turnaround, or whether the editor felt that it was important to have what he considers as the seminal writing on the topic together in this collection. In his introduction, Spier sparks the reader’s interest in Forsythe’s practice, but an outline of his own editorial vision would also be useful.

The rest of the book oozes novelty, often illuminating aspects of the most recent period of Forsythe’s work. There are important articles by Gerald Siegmund, Mark Franko, Chris Salter, and two of Forsythe’s dramaturges from different periods, Heidi Gilpin and Freya Vass-Rhee. Spier himself gives us an insight into Forsythe’s choreographic installation, developed as a form of community art. He also discusses the choreographer’s lesser known activities in Theater am Turm (TAT) – Forsythe’s second Frankfurt playground during the crisis period of Ballett Frankfurt. By illuminating this uncertain time, Spier allows us to see the seeds that grew into some of The Forsythe Company’s later concepts.

While the inclusion of previously published articles at first may be disappointing, greater scrutiny reveals Spier’s careful dialogue with the material presented: he edits the book as an attentive reader and expert architect, building the collection by drawing upon threads established in previous works (starting with a reflection on questions raised in

¹ The article is published on *Synchronous Objects* (<http://synchronousobjects.osu.edu>), Forsythe’s 2009 collaborative project with the Ohio State University, and also on The Forsythe Company’s web presentation of *Choreographic Objects* (<http://www.williamforsythe.de/essay.html>).

Driver's volume). Some contributors – Caspersen, Driver, Sulcas and Spier himself – we encounter in both collections, and their new articles in many ways follow up on their earlier interests. For example, in the articles by Driver and Sulcas (and also Franko as a fresh contributor in Forsythe discourse) we revisit the Ballett Frankfurt period, and these discussions create threads that lead toward Forsythe's later investigations (sometimes quite directly, as in Sulcas's updated critical analysis). The bridges between the two periods are drawn even more clearly in the first article by Siegmund ('Of Monsters and Puppets' 20-37), giving us a profound understanding of the choreographer's complex relationship with the construct of ballet as a language and part of the Western theatrical tradition. Similar connections are to be found in Salter and Vass-Rhee's discussions of Forsythe's use of sound and music, as the editor gently nudges us towards several areas of focus after the broader discourse. For example, Vass-Rhee's article on music introduces the theme of the performer's process, which is then elaborated in the subsequent articles (Caspersen, 'Decreation: fragmentation and continuity' (93-100); and Spier 'Inside the knot that two bodies make' (101-111)). There is a sense that the reader is making a full circle in Siegmund's second article, 'The space of memory' (128-138), as well as in Gilpin's 'Aberrations of gravity' (112-127): both bring us back to the Ballett Frankfurt era, but by now we are fully aware of very complex connections that can be found between the various strands of Forsythe's practice. Both Gilpin and Siegmund make the reader look deep into Forsythe's credo: the core of choreographic art is the principle of organisation (of bodies in space, or organisation of the space within a single body). Spier, in his own article, 'Choreographic thinking and amateur bodies' (139-150),

explains how these principles are extended to Forsythe's non-theatrical choreographic installations intended for communal spaces.

I anticipate that many readers will find the exploration of Forsythe's relationship with music a particular highlight of this book, as this area is discussed in greater detail here than it has been elsewhere. Salter's article, for example, focuses on the choreographer's use of music in the Ballett Frankfurt period, using the example of *Eidos:Tellos* (1995) to explicate a method of structuring sound environments that transforms 'the position of music and sound in relation to dancing bodies' (57). Vass-Rhee's article discusses the multiplicity of visual and aural counterpoints using an example from Forsythe's more recent choreography, *Three Atmospheric Studies* (2006).

As the book is written by people deeply involved in Forsythe's practice, it is factually sound throughout. The only fault in this regard is a very small one: I disagree with Spier's suggestion that, with the exception of a somewhat notorious collaboration with the Royal Ballet in 1996, Forsythe's work had not been well known in the United Kingdom before 1999 (140). In fact, *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated* premiered at the Royal Ballet as early as 1992, and the full version of *Herman Schmerman* was present in the company repertory in 1993 and 1994. Further, both ballets toured the UK prior to 1999. Nevertheless, with The Forsythe Company's lack of a traditional archive,² Spier's comprehensive, updated and fully credited chronological list of the choreographer's works at the end of the book will be an indispensable tool for many researchers.

² The Forsythe Company has no archive at the present moment, and few works are presented in archival form – (*Synchronous Objects for One Flat Thing Reproduced* is one). A more traditional holding exists as The Loss Project by Valerie Preston-Dunlop at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in London, with documentation on the creative process and performances of *The Loss of Small Detail* (1991).

Overall, Spier's book is a very well-rounded collection of texts, particularly significant for its tracing of sophisticated concepts that span across Forsythe's opus and various aspects of his practice. The collection in its entirety leaves one with a nuanced understanding of evolutionary links and common core principles found in two distinct periods of Forsythe's Frankfurt career. Spier's book provides impressive new contributions by individual authors, and, further, the articles collectively illuminate the elusive aspects, or the connective tissue, of Forsythe's practice. By devising an insightful and instructive textual structure, Spier walks the reader through this choreographic space, like a tour guide of an enchanted building, himself choreographing a kind of Forsythian dance-exploration for the reader to get lost in.

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London: Hayward, 2010.

***Theatre & Feeling* by Erin Hurley**

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 88 pp. (softback)

By Clara Escoda (University of Barcelona)

Theatre and Feeling testifies to the resurgence of an interest in the body and phenomenology within recent scholarship on drama and theatre studies. The book sets out

to establish feeling as a research object and method, and to challenge cultural hierarchies within theatre studies, which typify a Western tradition, such as the privileging of emotion over the corporeal, or the affective qualities of performance. In order to establish feeling as a methodology, Hurley reinterprets previous scholarship on feeling and emotions such as Arlie Hochschild's *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (1983), or Sarah Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), and applies them to the theatre to the effect of capturing the type of social and political work theatre does in 'making, managing, and moving feeling in all its types' (9).

The book is comprised of eight chapters, each of which assesses the centrality of emotions to theatre in very different ways. The discussion ranges from an introductory overview of the authors or playwrights who have dealt with the centrality of feeling to theatre, to a compelling attempt to describe the neurological basis of feeling responses. Finally, Hurley aptly undermines some of the prejudices associated with acting, as a typically 'embodied' profession, which the West has associated with the 'feeling body' (69).

In the third chapter, entitled 'Types of Feeling,' Hurley crucially begins by offering a useful description of the three types of feeling operative in the theatre, namely affect, emotion and mood (10). Affect refers to 'an organism's autonomic reaction to an environmental change' (17). It is an 'uncontrollable, individual experience [which] may result in an emotional expression' (17). Emotion, on the other hand, is a 'reflection on or conclusion-drawing from the evidence presented by our bodies and interpreted with the aid of contextual cues' (18).

Essential to Hurley's argument is the notion that feeling tends to be understood from an evolutionary perspective; that is, Western society 'grafts a hierarchy of feeling onto a hierarchy of development' (16), privileging emotion over affect, which tends to be ascribed to women and to people of colour. These hierarchies within capitalist society – where 'emotion ranks over affect, human over animal, and mind over body' – underpin a hierarchy of cultural forms within and sustains a broader, culturally specific hierarchy that 'elevates white over black and male over female' (53).

One of the main aims of Hurley's project, indeed, is to show that theatre may contribute to enacting resistance to capitalism by undermining the hierarchies that lie at the basis of capitalist economy. At this point, and in what is justified through a somewhat dualistic argument, Hurley claims that the 'feeling-technologies' (40) of theatre can be used either in order to produce a type of theatre that abstracts or sublimates feeling and the body or, alternatively, so as to produce an embodied type of theatre which may contribute to unifying the division between mind and body, reason and emotion, fundamental to a capitalist economy.

The book's third chapter, 'Feeling as the Purpose of Theatre,' is a central one which offers an especially good example of Hurley's main argument outlined above. In this chapter she claims that theatrical forms themselves can contribute to producing rational spectators who are divorced from their embodied experience or, by contrast, can dignify the human body and contribute to creating embodied spectators. Drawing on Aristotle's *Ars Poetica*, Hurley claims that theatrical forms may be divided between forms that 'profit,' whose goal is to 'benefit the audience usually by offering an instructive example,' and forms that 'please' (39), which aim to amuse spectators.

Within the first category, exemplified by Greek tragedy, fall those forms which ‘tend to downplay or redirect their affective influence on the spectator. They address the mind as though it has no physical extension, and the emotions represented in and activated by the plays tend to be the so-called cognitive emotions’ (59). Within the second category, or forms that please, are forms like melodrama, which activate affects and emotions.

Melodrama emerged during the industrial revolution, in a context in which working-class industrial workers were not considered as feeling, resistant and embodied individuals, but as bodies of capital and labour. Melodrama, instead, redefined the individual as characterised by the ability of being bodily responsive to the environment, as well as to the value of feeling and affect. Thus, when workers patronised the theatres, they were in fact asserting the value of feeling and the body, that is, the essential dignity of all human bodies/individuals beyond the hierarchies created by capitalism. Melodrama, Hurley argues, ‘drew back together in a pleasurable and positive way what had been forced apart by industrial labour practices, namely feeling and the body’ (55).

Hurley’s book is fascinating and well-argued, yet such a division according to the form of various plays is problematic, since forms that please, like melodrama, are also stereotypical in their depiction of affects and emotions, and they often reproduce the same hierarchies between feeling and effect, male and female, they seem to undermine. In this respect, Hurley offers the example of Douglas Jerrold’s *Black Ey’d Susan*, where affect is ascribed to women of colour in order to construct the superiority of the white man. Thus, as Hurley herself admits, melodrama tends to ‘confirm, *at the level of feeling*, the dominant moral ethos of the culture’ (62).

Such a division is excessively dualistic or binary, since it excludes the possibility that 'profit' forms may be performed or interpreted in ways which subvert or work against their own tendency for abstracting the body. In the same manner, forms that please, while emphasising and valuing affect, may tend to relegate it to women, to reproduce stereotypical gender patterns, and to confirm things as they are, thus reproducing oppressive, capitalist hierarchies. While it is crucial to realise that 'profit theatre,' which has traditionally been discursive and has privileged rationality, thereby relegating affect to women, tends to be the culturally valued form of theatre, forms that 'please' are equally problematic.

Perhaps what is needed is not the inclusion of particular forms *per se* into theatre studies and university curricula, but rather further research into how different playwrights, stage directors, or even the structure of specific plays, may use the feeling-technologies of theatre in order to denounce how capitalism disembodies individuals through the imposition of docile identities. How can playwrights or stage directors, by contrast, address spectators as resistant, embodied subjects, in whom body and mind, impulse and reason, feeling and affect, do work in unison? How can they subvert the Western tendency to value reason and the male self over and above the needs of the body and the rights of the Other?

Theatre and Feeling successfully establishes feeling as a methodology. Through its clarity and precision, as well as through its well-chosen examples, Hurley makes theatre and feeling accessible to a wide readership. The book thus delights while breaking new ground in the field, particularly regarding the crucial issue of how the feeling-technologies of theatre may contribute to a pedagogical, ethical programme. Most

importantly, the book highlights the necessity, in the age of global capitalism, for further research into a feeling-based approach to the politics of performance.

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