

Book Reviews

Theatre & Sexuality by Jill Dolan

London:Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 107, (softback)

REVIEWED BY MATT FOX

Theatre & Sexuality offers a series of signposts for the scholar to begin a journey into the fields of gender and performance. Jill Dolan brings an encyclopaedic knowledge to the book, making it a highly informative starting point for research. She skirts across reams of history and theory, and the most disappointing aspect of this short volume, and perhaps the *Theatre &* series as a whole, is that it leaves the reader wishing the erudite author had the scope to cover her material in more depth.

Acclaimed performance artist and self proclaimed Queer performer Tim Miller provides the foreword to the book. He grounds queer theory and gender studies within his own experience, and sets up the practice-based nature of the rest of the book. Dolan takes over from Miller and details the development of theatre and sexuality as a field in conjunction with changes in the field of sexuality itself, both politically and theoretically. She moves from the homophile movements of the 50s and 60s, through to the Stonewall Riot of 1969, into the gay liberation movement, lesbian feminism, and finally to the development of queer.

Theatre is often perceived as something of a ‘safe haven’ for alternative sexualities, but the struggles faced by communities within theatre have been no less difficult than elsewhere in society. As Dolan notes in the chapter ‘Gay and Lesbian Lives and Ideas in the Twentieth Century,’ heteronormativity is rigidly embedded both inside and outside the theatre (5-6). LGBTQ communities have been seen, and in many cases are still seen as, ‘the

Other.’ No amount of political campaigning and acceptance has yet changed this, and even the term ‘alternative sexualities,’ suggests a fringe to the mainstream. Despite these issues and continuing struggles within the LGBTQ movements, Dolan fully realises the importance of theatre in developments in the sphere of sexuality over the last half century (13). Whether theatre is utilised for direct action, social satire, fringe or mainstream production, sexuality is never far from the spotlight. As Dolan notes: ‘Community or social movement-orientated theatre continues to sustain a diverse LGBTQ population, but lesbian, gay, trans, and queer drama, whether assimilationist, or more radical, whether queer in content, intent, or form, more frequently disperses into the cultural mainstream’ (82). She goes on to highlight a number of key figures, companies and performances who have made significant headway in this regard and done crucial work.

A strength of the book is Dolan’s wide variety of queer theatre case studies. These include the lesbian performance troupe, The Split Britches, who developed in the United States performing in gay venues like the WOW café in New York’s East Village and Tim Miller himself, who famously uses his own nudity for comic but political means, playing with the comfort/discomfort of his audience through his one man shows. The limit, however, of these and other openly gay performers/performances is that in many cases they are preaching to the converted. As such, they can have a limited political effect on those most in need of being challenged in their attitudes to sexuality.

This situation is, however, slowly changing. As Dolan notes in her final chapter, ‘New Audiences: No Longer Preaching to the Choir,’ ‘[b]y the twenty-first century, the criterion of “authenticity,” which once demanded that gay, lesbian, or queer experience be represented only by those who had lived it, gradually relaxed into a more open standard in which alternative sexual identity onstage or onscreen could be addressed, performed, and received by anyone’ (81). One of the most interesting areas that Dolan explores, therefore, is

the crossing over of gay theatre figures between the fringe and mainstream. Terrance McNally for example, one of the first out gay white men to be accepted into mainstream theatre, ‘writes plays about gay men, but also plays and librettos that have nothing to do with sexual identity’ (48). This initial crossing over, although not directly bringing queer issues into the mainstream, laid the foundation for mainstream queer work later on. Dolan sees the importance of this, and rightly acknowledges the limits of queer theatre makers remaining in a purely fringe capacity. She goes on to demonstrate how, once commercially established, queer writers can more easily raise queer issues for a more politically advantageous audience. The highly commercial, Broadway musical *La Cage Aux Folles*, which ran for 1,761 performances is one of Dolan’s key examples of this phenomenon (22).

The most interesting aspect of *Theatre and Sexuality* is Dolan’s extended examination of *Belle Reprise*, performed by a cast comprising Lois Weaver and Peggy Shaw, formerly of the American company Split Britches, and Bette Bourne and Paul Shaw, of the UK based group Bloodlips. The piece, a reworking of Tennessee Williams’ classic play *A Streetcar Named Desire*, acts as a detailed case study of queer theatre. Dolan’s choice to dedicate so much space to the discussion of one piece of theatre does at first glance appear somewhat limiting. However, *Belle Reprise* in many ways exemplifies queer theatre as a genre and gives insight into the development of a relationship between theatre and sexuality. Dolan describes the original play in detail, as well as the iconic actors who have become part of its history (Marlon Brandon/Vivien Leigh). She also touches on the much debated relationship between the play and Williams’ own identification within the homosexual sphere. *Belle Reprise* can be seen, therefore, as both a queering of Williams’ piece and an illustration of the identity challenging function of queer theatre. The piece has a Brechtian self awareness and a clear agenda, based both on the rigid gender and sexual identities of the original characters and the problematic nature of these rigid sexualities for Williams as a gay figure. Whether it

is butch lesbian actor Peggy Shaw playing archetypal masculine brute Stanley Kawalski or drag queen Bette Bourne as fem victim Blanche Dubois, the very casting of the piece, before an actor has even stepped onto the stage, is a challenge to any preconceptions of gender and sexual identity within the playtext.

Theatre & Sexuality is an accomplished introduction to a complex and politically charged subject. Dolan's insights into the gradual infiltration of alternative sexualities from the early, solely gay venues of the mid twentieth century, through to the widespread presence of gay lives within commercial theatre and film are well documented and shed much light on the historical context of queer theatre. The book is optimistic, while being fully aware of the wealth of challenges still affecting LGBTQ communities. It strongly makes the case that theatre's engagement with gender and sexuality issues is as important as ever.

On Directing and Dramaturgy: Burning the House by Eugenio Barba (Trans. by Judy Barba)

London and New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 218, (softback)

REVIEWED BY STELLA KERAMIDA

In his new book *On Directing and Dramaturgy: Burning the House* the director-teacher and theorist-researcher Eugenio Barba provides insight into his main directorial principles: organic, narrative and evocative dramaturgy as levels of organization. The reader is offered an experience of Barba's endoscopic journey in relation to the value of his art.

Barba's book is full of details not only about his actor training techniques, but also about the materials he uses (physical-vocal actions, costumes, objects, space, sound, light), as well as about key examples from his performances. It includes confessions of the difficulties he has encountered during actor training process and illuminations of the ideology and ethos

of his work. Barba states: 'My way is personal, and as such it can be shared or not. But it is objectively verifiable, and as such it can be explained or at least described' (90). In this book the director does not refer exclusively to his famous multicultural theatrical heritage; rather, he shares the directorial logistics that are the foundation of his distinctive aesthetic style.

In the first part of *On Directing and Dramaturgy*, Barba focuses on the notion of organic dramaturgy as a level of organization. He argues: 'My work as a director was not guided by meanings, but by the actor's real actions and the synchronization of their relationships - their organic dramaturgy' (114). Organic dramaturgy constitutes 'precision, oppositions, rhythm, colours of energy, organic effect of each action, the quality of [the actors'] form, introvert or extrovert features, the dynamic action-reaction, accelerations and pauses, simultaneous and divergent rhythms of actions: their flow' (98). What is exciting about this approach is the emphasis Barba places on actor's materials as a state of dramaturgy, extending prevalent conceptions of the term.

In the second part of the book Barba discusses narrative dramaturgy as a level of organization. This type of dramaturgy differs from 'what is meant by narrative dramaturgy in the theatre which starts out from a text' (88). Consequently, he admits that: 'What I call narrative dramaturgy was only my particular way to narrate' (88). In other words, narrative dramaturgy is the unique dramaturgy that identifies each director. Barba's is, I believe, one of the few clear and concise published texts offering an insight into a director's creative logistics. It is not over-intellectualized by an academic scholar, but examined and analysed by the artist himself. It will, therefore, be of real value to many students interested in directing or to aspirant directors.

Barba's distinctive narrative dramaturgy consists in a narration-through-actions or a narration-behind-actions. The first of these creative methods is wide-spread today among theatre practitioners. It concerns the creation of stage action that conveys the fiction/narration

with clarity. The second takes place entirely on private terms and it includes the constellation of meanings and orientations which are concealed or revealed behind-actions. An exploration of the relationship between these two levels of organization is the Barba's main object of interest.

According to Barba, narrative dramaturgy 'is engraved itself on the organic one' and the two are 'inseparable' (98). Thus, these two paths - organic and narrative organization - are 'simultaneously present, each with its own logic' and collaborate 'in an unplanned way, combining precision (necessity) and chance (unpredictability)' (98). Prevalent ways of making and understanding theatre directing are based on the idea that the director's role is to take full control and carefully pre-plan all the steps/phases throughout the creative process. Barba shatters the foundations of this broadly conceived assumptions. For him, the director has to be brave enough to take risks without fear of failure by effectively using the component of chance-unpredictability to organize his/her dramaturgy.

The ways to establish bonds between the organic level and the narrative one are numerous: for example, one can lay emphasis on real actions and the actor's energy or presence; or one can start from developing an action, image or idea contrary to the obvious one (99). This encourages paradoxical thinking, which results in a paradoxical effectiveness in directing. Therefore, for Barba, the main value of this directorial strategy is revealed when he manages 'to collaborate with chance' and, thus, escape from his 'mental inclinations' (100).

One of the most inspiring contributions of this book comes when Barba shares conceptualisations of the phases of his directorial process. This helps us to grasp the essence of his dynamics. For example, 'actor's actions with their detailed and precise tensions' provoke 'mental patterns in the spectator' meaning 'produced predictability, comprehensibility, connections and dynamics of cause and effect' (91). However, according

to Barba, the director can challenge and provoke this system of thought by deceiving the kinaesthetic expectation of the spectator. Specifically, in his directing he encourages the spectators 'to project a justification on the actions of a scene, which, in the end, would have a value and a sense other than the ones shown by the actions' (92). This means that when the action starts arousing in the spectator 'the sensation of foreseeing its progress,' he drastically alters its tonic quality (its dynamism and intention) 'provoking a stinging effect on the spectator's attention.' He calls this stinging effect 'the experience of not seeing,' which sharpens theatrical reality, since it creates 'an experience of uneasiness' (92). What is inspiring about the above process is that the actor, the director and the audience, by embracing discomfort, resist mannerist performative conveniences. In this way, their energy and alertness remain at continuously high levels.

In the third and final section on evocative dramaturgy as a level of organization, Barba focuses on the spectator and exposes a very personal vision of what is broadly referred to as theatricality. This section offers an important contribution to the work of the renowned director, introducing notions such as 'the torrid zone of memory,' 'the leap of consciousnesses' (or 'change of state' in the spectator), the 'spectators-fetishes' and 'the elusive order' giving food for thought to theatre/performance students and scholars. This vision of theatricality emphasises the demand for a disordering of the audience's unity and a focus on individual reactions – on the mental behaviours and different associations that will emerge for each spectator. These ideas clearly draw on the beliefs of Barba's great teacher, Jerzy Grotowski.

With *Directing and Dramaturgy* Barba illustrates the functionality of his directing, critically reflecting on his own methods, while offering a vista of his rehearsals, actors' improvisations, field trips, and material sources - such as plays, poems, and religious texts. The book also contains a personal biography, political views, and notes from workshops. The

book has four wonderfully written intermezzos, with letters from Barba's friends, members of the audience and scholars. The intermezzos provide personal thoughts, quotations, notes, anecdotes, jokes, imagined facts, stories, and myths, which not only reveal Barba's virtue as a writer but also engage a gestaltic aesthetic sensibility. In Barba's book students, scholars and practitioners can find a sustained interpretation of a celebrated actor-based directorial practice and also of an intriguing account of a distinctive staging philosophy

***The Charismatic Chameleon: The Actor As Creative Artist* by Leslie O'Dell**

Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2010, pp. 309 (paperback)

REVIEWED BY EUGÉNIE PASTOR

In *The Charismatic Chameleon*, O'Dell provides tools for actors and acting teachers to understand and master the processes through which outstanding acting is achieved. The author argues that while most actors are excellent 'chameleons',¹ outstanding ones combine charismatic properties with these chameleon skills. The chameleon work O'Dell refers to consists in transforming 'in whatever way is necessary so that what is presented to the audience works, in whatever way it is supposed to' (9). In other words: 'the actor has to avoid getting in the way of the audience's experience' (9). Such properties are attainable through the acknowledgment and mastery of one's 'Creative Temperament.' The author thus offers techniques for actors to diagnose their Creative Temperament, and to use it to unlock their creative energy. The aim is to allow actors to feel constantly inspired and to overcome

¹ The 'chameleon work' O'Dell refers to consists in 'to transform in whatever way is necessary so that what is presented to the audience works, in whatever way it is supposed to'. In other terms: 'the actor has to avoid getting in the way of the audience's experience' (9).

creative blocks by knowing how best to use their creative processes, or all their skills in any situation required by the industry.

After a short preface in which the author explains the processes that led her to develop these tools for acting, the book opens with an ‘Introduction to Creative Temperament’ (2). In this section, O’Dell introduces the key concepts of her argument before they are developed the practical examples of Part 2. The author distinguishes six different Creative Personal Temperaments (xii), each composed of two different ‘conduits’ – ‘points of access through which the charismatic energy can be tapped’ (15). The conduits are ‘Action,’ ‘Perception,’ ‘Power,’ and ‘Relationship.’ The two latter conduits belong to the ‘cultural realm’ (16): the socio-historical specificities of a particular culture. ‘Action’ and ‘Perception’ belong to the ‘genetic realm,’ which O’Dell defines as ‘those aspects of the actor’s work that are most directly linked to what we inherit as members of the species’ (9). The combination of the Action and Power conduits creates a Dynamic Creative Temperament; the blending of Action and Relationship generates a Personal one; Relationship and Perception makes a Psychic one; Perception and Power, Visionary; the blending of Action and Perception creates an Innovative Creative Temperament and finally, Relationship and Power makes a Magnetic Temperament (19). In a colloquial and pragmatic tone, O’Dell clearly defines her terminology, making an effort to render it accessible.

Drawing on workshops led by O’Dell in North America with acting students over the course of five years, Part Two is presented as a ‘composite, made up of excerpts’ (23) from workshop sessions. This part, the main body of the book, is composed of dialogues between six participants, including the author herself, each embodying one of the six different creative types. The workshops are intersected by ‘digressions’ during which the author expands on a specific point raised during the workshop. The aim of the workshops is to provide examples of the ways each Temperament works, to determine which vocabulary is the most appropriate

depending on one's preferred conduits, to train one's acting skills in any situation, including situations of 'mismatches' (166), and to learn how to warm up and 'de-brief' (134) after rehearsal and performance. Apart from the digressions, the tone of which remains close to that used in Part 1, the Workshops read as scripts: the 'characters'' names, each of which represents a 'type,' are inscribed on the right hand side of the page, followed by each character's dialogue. A few sentences appear in italics, very much like stage directions, allowing the reader to become omniscient and providing a sense of liveness to the scenes.

The third part of the book is presented as an annotated bibliography, and aims to provide 'Development of the Theory' (219). It is divided into thematic sections in which the author includes theoretical references. Each one of these sections is heavy with endnotes, which point the reader to a very extensive body of works and to some more detailed explorations of topics that span different acting methodologies and techniques, from Method and Stanislavsky-based approaches to 'pre-modern performance styles' (221). The bibliography explores themes such as the psychology and phenomenology of acting (222), or sociology and anthropology, especially the concept of 'participant-observer' (226) - albeit in a superficial manner - as a useful tool for the teaching of acting. This third section gives a thorough and complete account of the theory that nurtured the author's argumentation, and provides very useful references, although not hierarchically organised. Such a partition of information allows different readers to find different amounts and levels of theory.

The main flaw of the book is its underlying statement of an opposition between theory and practice. While it is true that an insight into the pragmatic aspects of performance is needed in academic writing, and that O'Dell's book, being mainly directed at practitioners, does not aim to be a theoretical exploration, expressions such as '(l)ike many practitioners, I avoided the jargon-filled musings of theorists like the plague' (221), or the evocation of 'hair splitting' in reference to theatre scholarship (258) seem pejorative and binary. O'Dell's

laudable effort towards clarity and offering practical applications of theory does not need this artificial opposition to stand out as successful.

O'Dell's book provides a fresh and insightful perspective on the practice of acting. One of the main characteristics of her approach is to challenge the hegemonic position of Method acting and Stanislavsky-derived techniques that still very much prevail in the North American and British performance industries. She acknowledges the influence of approaches that are not Stanislavsky-inspired, mentioning the influence of Eugenio Barba, Tadashi Suzuki, and Rudolf Laban (Jaques Lecoq is notably absent). Her aim is not to dismiss or praise specific approaches, but to challenge dogmatic applications of them. O'Dell praises and acknowledges Stanislavsky's legacy and heritage, but emphasises the need for a toolbox approach to acting as opposed to a dogmatic one. She therefore provides a tailor-made approach, which she hopes is suitable for a significant number of actors, focusing on individuality rather than forcefully applying one method to all. This goal is achieved in part through the positioning of the author in a horizontal relationship with the reader rather than on a hierarchical one: for example, acknowledging her own limitations in the annotated bibliography (225) O'Dell places herself as an initiator rather than a master. These characteristics, combined with the performative dimension of the book, will prove an insightful resource for those interested in furthering their acting skills.

***Drama as Therapy: Clinical Work and Research into Practice (Volume 2)* Edited by Phil**

Jones

Hove: Routledge, 2010, pp. 296, (hardback)

REVIEWED PEGGY SHANNON

Drama as Therapy: Clinical Work and Research into Practice (Volume 2) is a compilation of articles by drama therapists who over the past 25 years have found value in using drama as an alternative therapeutic medium. The volume shows that the variety of possibilities for dramatherapy is notable and that the evolving discipline is impressive in its breadth of application. Settings for the practice range from prisons and detention centres to neuro-rehabilitation centres, to more traditional clinical offices. While dramatherapy has been used with clients across a wide range of demographics, including those with learning disabilities, dementia, HIV and cancer, as well as with families, youth and senior groups, there does not appear to be one guiding theoretical approach to its application. Each chapter begins with a set of questions and answers about an individual practitioner's work, his or her research perspective, and a brief analysis of client perspective samples. Through this structure, the reader gains an immediate context for the models and theories discussed within each chapter, and an outward understanding of the range of therapeutic and assessment tools employed.

In this second volume of *Drama as Therapy*, Phil Jones includes interviews with some of the most pivotal theorists in the field, including Sue Jennings, Robert Landy, Dorothy Langley, Adam Blatner, David Read Johnson, and Helen Payne. He also includes a younger generation of researchers such as French Ph.D. candidate Athena Madden. While Volume I of *Drama as Therapy* was intended as an introduction to the insightful use of drama in therapeutic contexts, Volume 2 explores the burgeoning growth of the field, providing a clearer view of dramatherapy as a sophisticated therapeutic tool. The creation of new applied therapeutic techniques through collaboration across artistic, historical, and social science sectors is striking. As dramatherapy has engaged with multiple academic and artistic disciplines, it has also inspired a rapid growth of professional associations to regulate practice and quality of care (Jones xix).

As a theatre director who has incorporated dramatherapy techniques into my professional stage work since the 1970s (following a workshop on the then nascent practice with Sue Jennings in England), I am fascinated by the extent to which *Drama As Therapy: Clinical Work and Research into Practice* reveals the evolution of the field over the last four decades. I was pleased to learn that the discipline has become a practice with such wide-ranging applicability. To fully engage with the theoretical models offered in this compilation, it is helpful if the reader has some background in Western theatre practice, traditional therapeutic tools, or both. While it is not essential to have an in-depth understanding of psychoanalytic processes, some knowledge of specific methodology and assessment tools may be helpful in deciphering practitioner effectiveness within the various demographics discussed.

The book is organized into two parts: Part 1 offers interviews with key theorists that provide context for the chapters, while Part 2 speaks to the broad range of dramatherapy practice through an analysis of case studies written by the individual practitioners. In Part 1, clinical practice is discussed in three ways: context, research, and dialogue. The reader is reminded that research into dramatherapy theory and practice has been ‘one of discovery within its own emergent methods and ideas, alongside dialogue and engagement with related disciplines’ (Jones 3) ranging from neuroscience to psychotherapy to dance and Forum Theatre. In dramatherapy, the overriding emphasis is on problem solving for the individual patient through the use of theatrical, creative tools in tandem with more traditional forms of psychoanalysis. In this volume, Jones sets the stage for a discussion of how, when, why and where dramatherapy is practiced, beginning with a reminder of origin of the term itself (‘dramatherapy’ began as practitioners found out about each other’s work occurring within a variety of settings, from hospitals to prisons to private practice (3))

In Part 2, the reader is introduced to a wide-ranging discussion of how dramatherapy practitioners create relationships between overall processes, theoretical models and their specific practices. For example, in Chapter 9 Naomi Gardner-Hynd, a senior dramatherapist working with clients with learning disabilities and mental health problems within the National Health Service, discusses her use of key psychotherapy principles such as establishing trust through safe and contained boundaried space. She explains that she implements a four-pronged cycle of therapy and creativity: Preparation, warm-up games and relaxation; Incubation, which is the main activity of role play, mask work, etc; Illumination, reflective exercises; and Verification, the conscious and subconscious processing of information and revelation (172-188). She articulates clearly her synthesis of drama activities and traditional forms of therapy. In Chapter 4, Christine Novy notes how certain core processes such as ‘dramatic projection’ inform her practice with female offenders, and how she has combined techniques that enable her clients to act out their personal issues in order to witness externally issues that had only been experienced internally up until that point (65-83). This ‘Narrative of Change’ draws on the work of narrative therapists J. Freedman and G. Combs as well as Western theatre techniques. A third noteworthy example is the practice of Lindsay Chipman, who bases her methodology and theoretical framework on the work of psychotherapists Cosden and Reynolds, two psychotherapists who have used photographs as tools in the therapeutic relationship. Chipman describes how she follows suit with her ‘Photo Theatre of the Self’ activity, and reflects on her resulting assessment tools, specifically ‘role therapy’ which utilises self-portrait photography (105-124). All of the aforementioned practitioners discuss their reliance on core processes for examining and articulating client transformation and evaluating effectiveness of treatment methodologies.

In summary, the interviews with key theorists in Part 1 coupled with the description of practice by the therapists themselves in Part 2 make this book engaging reading for anyone

interested in drama as a therapeutic tool. Yet, while each practitioner cites theoretical models of influence, core psychoanalytic and dramatic processes, and methodology germane to his or her individual practice, it might be challenging for a lay person to fully appreciate or evaluate effectiveness of the described models. With so many dramatherapists included in this volume, it leaves the reader longing for more detailed descriptions of each practice. Perhaps the next volume will offer just that.

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19- 23.

***Movement Training for the Modern Actor* by Mark Evans**

London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 212, (hardback)

REVIEWED BY KONSTANTINOS THOMAIDIS

Mark Evans' *Movement Training for the Modern Actor* is not another manual to be added to the expanding corpus of movement books for actors. Therefore I can imagine hasty readers surprised by the lack of descriptions of specific training sequences or the absence of diagrams and photos from rehearsal rooms. Likewise, one can easily picture connoisseurs questioning the non-existence of sections dedicated to Grotowski, Barba or Bogart's work. However, the purpose of Evans' book, published in the Routledge Advances in Theatre and Performance Studies series, is different – and, for a plethora of reasons, groundbreaking.

Movement Training for the Modern Actor is a reworking of Evans' doctoral research (2003), part of which consisted of extensive interviews with students and movement tutors from major UK drama schools (Central School of Speech and Drama, Guildhall, Manchester Metropolitan University, Rose Bruford). The interview sample is already indicative of the book's scope: the principles underpinning the teaching of expressive physicality in leading, conservatory-type institutions. This is quite an unusual choice, as scholarly publications seem more at ease when putting under the analytical microscope alternative or avant-garde approaches to the performer's body (see, for example, Allain, Rudlin, Zarrilli, as well as the entire 'Routledge Performance Practitioners' series). Stemming from the body's rise to (philosophical) prominence over the last century, this is the first large-scale attempt to evaluate the dialogue between this discursive turn of twentieth-century and the 'mainstream' movement training for actors, dialogue which is described in the book as an 'osmotic process' (2).

Evans' is not a discourse on the body in performance, but a dissection of the making of this body, of its training—and, even more importantly, of the *makings* of this making. The author sheds light on the surrounding ideologies and cultural norms which are simultaneously evoked and validated (and/or hopefully resisted) in the movement training offered to the modern actor. Particularly focusing on the context of the British theatre industry, this is a rigorous account of the historical processes through which specific understandings of the body have become embedded in the broader cultural context of the UK. It is precisely within this well-defined framework that three systematic approaches to physicality make the backbone of Evans' work: the methods by Matthias Alexander, Rudolf Laban and Jacques Lecoq, widely applied in the UK.

The first chapter unfolds in two parts. The first is, to employ Foucauldian terminology, an *archaeology* of modern British theatre training as it lucidly presents 'the play of analogies

and differences as they appear at the level of rules of formation' (Foucault 178). Evans unearths the circumstances under which particular conceptualisations of the body and subsequent studies of movement were shaped, recognising as his central hypothesis that 'systems of movement training for actors are discursively constructed around accepted knowledges of "how movements are *best* done," and around particular forms of biomechanical and psychophysical efficiency' (14; emphasis added). In this light, Evans is right to assert that the notion of efficiency is not, although it may sometimes appear so, a universal. He establishes that efficiency is a direct product of the scientific examination of bodily mechanics and the search for a coherent set of principles ruling, explaining and predicting its physiological manifestations. Evans looks at mid-nineteenth century European gymnastics (16-18), the military training attached to the rise of nationhood (29-32) and the photographic revolution which allowed for the body to be scrutinised frame by frame (18-20), in order to argue that the concept of efficiency, linked to practices of measurement and classification, bears heavy capitalist overtones. The body is discursively articulated as a machine the constituent parts of which can be examined in isolation and are later re-assembled in the most effective manner. Immersed in this tradition, Laban's and Alexander's systems have nonetheless realised a radical shift towards an expressive physicality and a process of self-improvement through movement (32-36).

The second part moves along the lines of Foucauldian *genealogy*. Links and interconnections are traced between the aforementioned nexus of bodily practices and discourses (ranging from de-urbanised imaginings, such as nudist practices, to advances in therapeutical approaches) and the genesis and original formulation of keystones of British movement training. Evans takes us on a well-informed journey from the marginalised physicality of the itinerant players to the centrality of integrative/holistic movement in the here-and-now. His brief historiography also revisits the 'Greek revival' of the early twentieth

century (44-50) and the subsequent struggles against upper-class social dance or fencing routines and the prioritisation of the voice which predominated in the post-war drama school environment. All case studies and documentation are used to support the author's claim that '[t]he movement training of actors offers a complex but resonant paradigm for the late capitalist human condition' (68).

The second chapter delves into a probing of the infamous common thread of movement pedagogy, the concept of the 'neutral body.' Evans acknowledges that in the post-Foucault and post-Butler era this 'can no longer be treated as simple material entit[y], but should also be recognized as ideological construc[t]' (70). On these grounds, he brilliantly showcases the direct links between the body's 'neutrality' and the rethinking of the 'natural' through the project of Enlightenment and he combines multiple perspectives to demarcate the characteristics of the 'neutral/natural' in pedagogy. Training in efficiency, integration and responsiveness is regarded as a process of eradication of social inscriptions, involuntary tensions and blocks, as well as of the artifice with which traditional modes of performance and training bequeathed the actor. Meanwhile, Evans draws our attention to the fact that the above-mentioned, seemingly pre-cultural bodily states, inspired by the paradigms of the animal, the savage, the child, or the noble ancient Greek, are centered around (phal)logocentric ideals, and function as an implicit discarding of other bodies as professionally unacceptable: the feminine (106-12), the lower-class (114-17), the ethnic (112-14), the dis/abled (104-06).

Chapters three and four further extend the process of giving voice to, of making audible the cultural and professional dictates ingrained in the making of the actor's body. The first regards this silent, not-much-talked-about process, as one that tacitly turns the body into a site of docility, into a malleable *tabula rasa*. As showcased in the variety of interview extracts, of the utmost importance in the process of disciplining is the assimilation by the student of the

key terminology of the doctrine (123-25). Neutrality can lead to vulnerability, uniformity and commodification of the actor's body. However, the fourth chapter moves further than (intentional) signification and makes the case for a body that, beyond subjectification, on the interstices or margins of disciplining, employs the powerful tools of playfulness, *jouissance*, excess and expressivity to contest and challenge socially approved norms, therefore becoming a site for resistance (164-170).

Besides the convincing overarching argument, the book is also interspersed with several other little gems for the reader. For example, mid-century male international innovators are revealed as promoting themselves as authors, whereas mostly female tutors disseminated and merged the ideas with the needs of the industry on a more pragmatic level (7-9). Or, alternative movement trainings (Odin, Gardzienice, Grotowski), with their opposition to urban influences, can be seen as embodying a discourse on non-efficiency. Also, Evans' comments can/should necessitate radical reevaluation of the practices employed by movement trainers as

The political ownership that students might seek to regain over their bodies is, and can only ever be, partial and contingent. It is created and sustained within the context of a desire to succeed in an industry that requires specific commercial uses of their bodies. (136)

Evans rightly presents movement training as a balancing act between rigorous cultural inscription and undecidedness, unruliness, or the 'corporeal unpredictability' (144) emerging through exhaustion and risk-taking. This book, certainly more interested in the context/contours of movement pedagogy rather than its content, and with a meticulously compiled list of bibliographical sources, is a most welcome addition to the blossoming field of critical engagement with body praxis.

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