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## Itinerant Spectator/Itinerant Spectacle by P. A. Skantze (review)

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stagehands cleaning up leftover blood at the end of the production as an unintentional denouement to the tragedy. By bringing to light constitutive though often hidden backstage elements, Lunberry argues that these productions make spectators aware of performance's construction and manipulation of "a theatrical time that was, like the stage itself, separate from *our* time, the *real time* of us in the audience" (60; emphasis in original).

Shifting the focus away from the conventional proscenium arch theatre, Lunberry's second section theorizes performance's temporality in nontraditional performance spaces. Here the argument develops with more consistency, narrowing the focus to the temporal experience of spectators, readers, and critics. Beginning by discussing Antonin Artaud's letters to Jacques Rivière, Lunberry expands on Jacques Derrida's work on Artaud to suggest that these letters can be understood as performative spaces, and the act of writing as a performance of trauma. Moving on to his own acts of writing and rewriting, in chapter 6 Lunberry revisits his marked-up copy of Derrida's "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation," reading his highlighting, marginalia, and other marks on the page as artistic works themselves, even reconstituting them visually in the pages of his book as aesthetic works. Lunberry's most successful contributions are in these moments of self-reflexivity: his own reading and rereading become acts of communion with the past, "a means to read in real-time—'live'—something of my own dispersal as a reader across past-time" (87; emphasis in original).

Lunberry productively extends his analysis of the scene of writing in his discussion of Hamilton's and Turrell's installation art. In Hamilton's *tropos*, writing as a performance becomes literalized, staging the private act of writing (and in *tropos*, unwriting) as public performance. Lunberry argues that in "Hamilton's installations, there is presented a space within which we stage ourselves, or find ourselves staged, traces alongside the other (in)stalled, arrested elements" (102). Indeed, this is the case for the author himself, who turns to his memories of visits to Hamilton's exhibitions, characterizing her work as producing spaces that stage one's own acts of remembering. Similarly, Lunberry describes his experience of Turrell's silent installations as accompanied by his own "seemingly unstoppable engagement with a mediating language, a kind of 'voice-over' to [his] own viewing" (111). For Lunberry, Hamilton's and Turrell's works are not only artistic achievements, but also valuable in their creation of spaces that facilitate self-recognition of and self-reflection on spectatorial processes of listening, reading, interpreting, and experiencing.

In his final chapters Lunberry at last comes to his touchstone, Cage, and his fellow composer Feldman—both of whom produced work that encourages not only listening, but an awareness of listening. While Cage is interested in producing work that invites listeners to hear beyond the room itself, to hear the myriad concurrent sounds of the world, Lunberry points out Feldman's alternate approach: to create musical spaces in which audience members are "situated to hear aspects of their own hearing in the physical act of listening" (159). As Lunberry meditates on his visits to hear Feldman's work performed live, he grapples again with age-old issues of time and memory. Foregrounding this struggle is a beneficial strategy: he finds that his acts of listening and perceiving in the moment are unceasingly infused with memories of previous encounters with the work, manipulating and modifying his experience of the work in the present.

*Sites of Performance* offers an original approach by foregrounding Lunberry's personal (and subjective) experience as a spectator. Weaving together analyses of traditional performance genres with other platforms for performance, Lunberry finds resonances in disparate though linked forms to demonstrate the complementarity of different spectatorial experiences. While *Sites of Performance* does not sustain a theorization of temporality through each chapter, the strength of the book lies in the author's exploration of his personal memories, writing and rewriting his own experiences of the performances he discusses. By interrogating his own processes of perception and self-reflection Lunberry creates a complex reading of the relationship between spectatorship and mortality, illuminating our tenuous relationship to time.

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**Itinerant Spectator/Itinerant Spectacle.** By P. A. Skantze. Brooklyn, NY: Punctum Books, 2013; pp. 262.

Reading the pages of P. A. Skantze's wonderful new book *Itinerant Spectator/Itinerant Spectacle*, I cannot imagine having a better performance companion or a better model for how to watch theatre. Skantze delivers nothing short of the deepest and most beautiful recitation on, and poetic manifesto about, learning to spectate. While she embraces Walter Benjamin's construction of the *flâneur*, the "semi-conscious wanderer," she nonetheless offers something much more complex and compelling than the productive sparks that occur as a result of

"incidental turnings." Rather, Skantze provides a model for how to watch responsibly. This, of course, should not be confused with some didactic notion of watching attentively or remembering faithfully. Instead, inspired by the *flâneur*, Skantze employs a method of spectating that provides "textual 3D glasses, a kind of looking that sees the historical dimensions, often flattened when one looks without such an aid, with the added volumes made by memory and interpretation" (8). The book sets out to demonstrate how memory and time should be brought to bear on our interpretations of theatrical events. Skantze's adopted metaphor of the weathered threshold allows her to theorize a type of palimpsest for theatre viewing.

The chapters are organized around broad elements that impact viewing (satisfaction, sound, structures, senses, and states) and are often anchored to a particular production (*Ubu and the Truth Commission* in chapter 1, *Story of a Soldier* in chapter 3, and *Blind Date* in chapter 5), but the chapters productively meander around various productions. Ultimately, the chapters perform Skantze's memories about specific productions in New York, Rome, and London, even as she acknowledges that her memories are imaginations, and that "the spectator [she is] at any given performance perishes as surely as any romantically imagined fragile performance" is fleeting and ephemeral (25). Now, I should say from the outset that I am wary of projects that flaunt their international bravura and un-self-reflexive cosmopolitanism, but Skantze never falls into that trap. Instead, she exposes her own mistakes in translations when watching productions in non-English languages; she reveals her own distempered responses to translation devices (both auditory and visual); she uncovers her own artistic intolerances for productions that have become not only famous, but also canonical; and she discloses her ever present pessimism at the beginning of every new production. (She writes: "As the lights dim or the action begins or the performer appears in the gallery, I suffer an unfamiliar and deep pessimism, my heart sinks as I think, 'oh this might not be good'" [15].) These confessions serve to lay bare an imperfect, vulnerable, self-conscious, and yet open-hearted spectator. So even as Skantze describes productions we have not seen in the past and may never see in the future, her written memories envelop the reader like the gentlest embrace that invites us to imagine along with her.

Moreover, Skantze is fearless in her willingness to raise issues that cause what she calls "uncomfortable pauses" in conversation. As an early modern race scholar, I loved the following bit of fearlessness:

Wherever I roam, I read programs, I see theatre, I hear interviews in which men, overwhelming

white men, continue to dominate the imaginative space as protagonists, actors/makers, and directors. You might be a white man reading this, and the statement may have frozen your reception the way I find in conversation with others that mentioning what is so patently visible, the tiny proportion of women in charge, the tiny proportion of people of color as actors, directors and writers, tends to create an uncomfortable pause unless the conversation takes place among those who find themselves under-represented. (32–33)

Then Skantze acknowledges that there are those who argue that visibility is not the same as representation, and she notes how often that becomes an excuse for noninclusive practices ("for a performance of an opera at the English National Opera where in the 100 chorus members, the several principal singers, there is not a person of color among them" [33]). The deeply personal, passionate, engaged, and, as I said before, self-consciously flawed voice we experience in *Itinerant Spectator/Itinerant Spectacle* renders these moments less uncomfortable. Skantze invites us to puzzle together.

Writing from a perspective that imagines herself always as a part of a collective, Skantze moves beyond the collectivity of any specific audience (the one in the same room, location, and/or space of any given production) to envision spectators that may never be in the same room, location, and/or space together. Thus she generously and generatively puts questions to this imagined collective. The result is a book that often reads like a gold mine for doctoral candidates, with topics and areas that need further exploration. For instance, in the chapter titled "Satisfaction," Skantze describes three productions that did not feel particularly satisfying during the performance, and yet she finds herself returning to them imaginatively. Then she invites her fellow *flâneurs* to ponder together about time, reception, and change: "So I wonder, might there be a category for plays that do something other than 'work' in the moment of their presentation. I remember thinking, trying to account for what seemed like a change in perception, . . . how beginnings and endings can be rendered in such a way that [some productions] release what they appear to contain" (66). Dissertation topic, right? It is not that Skantze is shirking the responsibility of delving into the topic thoroughly and then answering the question definitively, but rather that the collective address is her focus and aim.

So when the author returns at the end of the book to quote Andre Lepecki's argument (about Henri Bergson) that "any act, as long as it continues generating an effect and an affect, remains in the present" (165), she invites, enables, and ushers her readers to those "weathered thresholds" that

Benjamin celebrated. In *Itinerant Spectator/Itinerant Spectacle* Skantzze allows us to hover in those doorways together, as a collective that will create new ways of spectating.

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**THE EXQUISITE CORPSE OF ASIAN AMERICA: BIOPOLITICS, BIOSOCIALITY, AND POSTHUMAN ECOLOGIES.** By Rachel C. Lee. Sexual Cultures series. New York: New York University Press, 2014; pp. 336.

Rachel Lee waits until the concluding chapter to fully explain the striking title of her book, *The Exquisite Corpse of Asian America: Biopolitics, Biosociality, and Posthuman Ecologies*. Lee explains her evocation of a dead body by referencing the surrealist method of artistic collaborators assembling images into a composition (or body) without knowledge of one another's contributions. This understanding of the "exquisite corpse" (or *cadavre exquis*)—as a compositional exercise that folds upon itself and thus defies heteronormative social arrangements—is presaged by the book's table of contents, which dissects each chapter into one or more body parts, ranging from the assignment of the "vagina and GI tract" to a chapter on the scatological humor of Korean American comedienne Margaret Cho to the assignment of the "head" to a chapter on Japanese American performance artist Denise Uyehara's meditations on mental illness. But alongside Lee's structural mapping of the body through its disassembled parts is an assumption that is threaded more evenly throughout the monograph: that the exquisite corpse is actually the dearly departed body of Asian Americanist critique in its classical sense, which Lee defines as a longstanding project of returning to "humanistic wholeness" mainstream (white) US society's negative, partial, and oversimplified images of the Asian body (220). Dancing on the grave of this "older tradition," Lee proclaims her rejection of her predecessors' "desire for an adequate interiorized view of the immigrant psyche" (*ibid.*), and sets out to examine the cultural productions of artists of color that both defy the model minority myth that has long plagued Asian Americans, as well as the binary structures of Western modernity that privilege humanity, health, and wholeness over nonhumans, disability, and hybridity. Her critique emits from recent critical interventions in animal studies and affect theory that problematize the

reification of what Giorgio Agamben calls *bios* (politically worthy human life), as defined against *zoe* (bare, animal life) (47). Lee uses the binary of *bios* versus *zoe* to establish her own theory of *zoe*-ification (rendering fellow humans as a species apart), which augments classic Asian American cultural theories such as Lisa Lowe's notion of "immigrant acts" and Karen Shimakawa's idea of "national abjection" by adding scientific and technological layers, as well as an attention to boundary-crossing acts of care-taking (48).

Lee situates *The Exquisite Corpse of Asian America* at the intersection of feminist science and technology Studies (STS), Asian American studies, performance studies, and an array of other (inter)disciplines. As a result, the level of jargon that characterizes her discourse is often frustratingly thick, with pages of theoretical scaffolding delaying the onset of her mostly contemporary case studies, which include novels like Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats*, Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome*, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, choreography by Taiwanese American Cheng-Chieh Yu, the visual art of Kenyan-born Allan de-Souza (composed with the artist's own body parts and other organic materials), and spoken-word performances by Cho and Uyehara. The performing artists receive the most valuable and thickest descriptions by Lee, with a brilliant analysis of Cho's "pussy ballistics" that adds to the already impressive secondary literature that Lee has produced about that often polarizing comedienne.<sup>1</sup> The chapter on Cho lacks images, which is more than made up for in the highly illustrated chapters on Uyehara and Yu. The body parts of "teeth, feet, gamete" are assigned to the chapter on Yu's acrobatic, modern dance theatre, which emerged at the turn of the last century as a form of transnational diplomacy among the United States, the People's Republic of China, and the Republic of China in Taiwan. Lee persuasively argues that Yu's obvious focus on the uppermost and lowermost parts of the body—teeth and feet—competes with a narrative attention to recent biotech innovations at the gamete-level, such as stem cell research. Repeatedly, Lee's alternative readings reveal Asian American artists that question dominant society's privileging of heteronormative reproduction, bio-optimization, and self-contained notions of the individual/self. At times, however, the ambitious interdisciplinarity of Lee's project results in historical blindspots that may irk theatre historians. Moreover, the monograph ends without satisfying the reader's desire for a proper conclusion, offering instead six "propositions" for using "ascendant biopolitical re-

<sup>1</sup>Rachel C. Lee, "'Where's My Parade?' Margaret Cho and the Asian American Body in Space." *TDR: The Drama Review* 48, no. 2 (2004): 108–32.