

could have made just as strong an argument by sticking exclusively with Adorno; or, in my humble opinion, actually created a better argument by using the historical-theatrical philosophy of Nietzsche.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of the monograph, however, is the fact that Brecht seems curiously absent from the text. Theoretically, Oesmann sticks closely to works such as "Street Scene," *The Threepenny Trial*, and a few other texts, but does not indulge the full extent of Brecht's theoretical writings. She does explore Brechtian concepts such as *Verfremdung*, *episches Theater*, *Gestus*, *Haltung*, and *eingreifendes Denken*, but these either are not fully supported through textual exegesis of Brechtian works, or are undermined by an unbalanced analytical approach that favors the theoretical insights of the various philosophers to the diminishment of Brecht. In her defense, Oesmann does provide full coverage of Brecht's dramatic works. However, this is where Brecht is also absent in the text; the analysis of Brecht's plays remains firmly in the realm of dramatic, and not theatrical, criticism. Oesmann presents a reader's analysis of the plays, when she could, and should, spend more time examining how the plays actually worked in production and onstage. After all, what distinguishes Brecht from the likes of Adorno, Benjamin, and Nietzsche is that he did not write extended philosophical treatises because he was mounting his theoretical insights on the living stage.

Yet, despite these criticisms as well as the absence of a conclusion chapter, Oesmann's work provides a solid and important foundation for the understanding of Brechtian theatre as a space in which history and historical consciousness are explored, deconstructed, revitalized, and ultimately transformed.

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BUTTING OUT: READING RESISTIVE CHOREOGRAPHIES THROUGH WORKS BY JAWOLE WILLA JO ZOLLAR AND CHANDRALEKHA. By Ananya Chatterjea. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004; pp. xv + 377. \$70.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

Few manuscripts connect theory to practice in as provocative and productive a manner as this volume. Chatterjea ties together many strands of theory—including critical race, postcolonial, aesthetic, materialist, and feminist—into a disarm-

ingly personal and potent knot, destined to shift paradigms surrounding performance and its reception. Writing to tether readings of particular dances to a history of ideas, the author hopes to "suggest that racial and cultural difference are matters neither personal nor ontological, but of construction" that "need to be understood through critical engagement" (xiii). Far more than an exploration of the choreography of its two outstanding artist subjects, this remarkable volume shakes the very foundations of dance studies as an area of inquiry.

Chatterjea moors her troubling of complex theoretical waters with readings of dances by two women who both direct internationally known companies and are choreographers who have "radicalized the cultural production in their communities, weaving the aesthetic and the political in powerful signification" (xiii). According to the author, Zollar and Chandralekha engage "a politics of defiant hope" (42) in their work, a commitment that demands simultaneous consideration "without attempting a 'cross-cultural' study in the mode of liberal relativism": one that speaks instead to "emerging notions of global resistances to white and Western dominance and the urgent energies gathering around possibilities of alliances along lines of progressive politics and color and across national borders" (171). Indeed, "resistive identification" becomes a strategy of the volume as a whole, as a methodology to move through varied modalities of analysis that draw on the work of cultural theorists including Homi Bhabha, Susan Bordo, Brenda Dixon Gottschild, bell hooks, Gayatri Spivak, and Cornel West.

To ground her analyses, Chatterjea must dismantle a slew of assumptions that permeate typical narratives of performance history in the West. She fractures the notion of tradition as a stable term, a maneuver of some import in the marketplace of professional dance production. Taking on the implications of official culture, within which "problematic hierarchies are created," she notes how hegemonic notions of tradition "tend to even out differences among local practices" which then constitute "another kind of mainstream, mobilizing an exclusive route of legitimization" for innovations in performance (7). In this, women artists, "particularly in postcolonial contexts, have been scripted in 'tradition' and entrusted with the responsibility with embodying cultural continuity," a task above and beyond the call of their white Western counterparts (20).

Among many stunning formulations, Chatterjea's complication of the postmodern stands out. As she

wonders how the postmodern might “manifest itself in my brown body, Indian passport in hand, when I make dissonant the rhythms of my classically ordered feet, even as I hold on to my tribhanga-bent body” (107), she deftly brings into focus the urgent need for nuanced articulations of broad categories, including modern, primitive, and postmodern. Arguing for an awareness of “specific reference to the cultural contexts in which they are articulated,” Chatterjea calls for alternative formations that can encompass the innovations of artists of color within their particular relationship to traditional practices. This becomes crucial: “in the lack of theorizing the context in which they are located, the changing and volatile cultural and political context of their work, they appear as ahistorical figures somehow transcending their otherwise ‘age-old’ legacy” (112). Claiming an impatience with the “selective oppositionality” of Euro-American postmodernism, Chatterjea wants to theorize a radical postmodern, one that is not, however, “postmodern eclecticism, but rather necessary intersections of synchronous and diachronous modes to create cultural contexts of depth, without modernist nostalgia” (134). This resistant aesthetic becomes an important marker of the radical postmodern, a “notion of reclaiming the past through politics, memory, and desire, rejecting a simple notion of recuperation, subverting some of the obvious attitudes and assumptions of the modern, mediating a contemporary relationship with ‘tradition’ and ‘culture’ through constructed and reconstructed narratives” (170).

Chatterjea also raises the so-called historical problem that casts narratives to serve agendas with little interest in women’s circumstances or survival, an obvious irony in a field built largely from the physical effort of women: “These histories, while caught up in patriarchal agendas and often dominated by male nationalist leadership, are nevertheless largely women-centered: populated by female figures who are crucial as dancers, choreographers, characters in pieces, in effecting the historical transitions that indeed constitute history” (148). Dance can create a resistant space to these grand narratives, as artists like Zollar “overturn both the conflation of blackness with ‘tradition’ and the reading of blackness as the trope of ‘restriction,’ and instead mobilize blackness as an intervention and a critique of the projected ‘universality’ of Euro-American modes” (170).

Chatterjea bases her analyses in a “multilayered materiality,” an experiential understanding of methodologies gleaned from time spent training physically with the dancers under scrutiny. This allows her terrific insight to nuances of process and prac-

tice that could easily evade other research approaches, especially the too-prevalent “body-based” literature that often “ends up, conversely enough, emphasizing the slipperiness of the body, as if dodging the writers’ avowed intention, . . . so that, in the end, there is indeed no concrete sense of the body in the writing” (73). Instead, she invites us to consider the “infinite, subtle, negotiations of the body, seldom articulated in language even in teaching, but imbibed through watching-and-replicating, little *sediments of cultural resonance*, that create the special flavor of a technique” (75). In this, the volume predicts a combination of research and practice that can only enliven the possibilities of dance as an area of inquiry.

The last long chapter—about half of the book—consists of Chatterjea’s readings of several works. Here, more traditional dance studies methodologies, combined with cultural studies approaches, take the foreground, as the author offers dense literary accounts of particular performances: five by Chandralekha (*Angika* [1985], *Yantra* [1994], *Sri* [1990], *Raga* [1998], and *Sloka* [1999]) and six by Zollar (*Batty Moves* [1995], *Womb Wars* [1992], *Hands Singing Song* [1998], *Bones & Ash* [1995], *Shelter* [1988], and *Bitter Tongue* [1987]). Reading along, I did notice that none of these works was made in the twenty-first century, an era in which resistant aesthetics seem nearly impossible to engage in terms of concert dance. No matter: perusing the well-produced photographs here, I can imagine dance performances that engage multiple lines of corporeal awareness, even as they resist any singular theoretical formulations. This book demands complex response; its pages burn.

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WOMEN, MODERNISM, AND PERFORMANCE. By Penny Farfan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; pp. xi + 173. \$75.00 cloth.

Key terms first: the women of Penny Farfan’s title are Elizabeth Robins, Ellen Terry, Virginia Woolf, Djuna Barnes, Edith Craig, and Isadora Duncan. Modernism is broadly construed, as Farfan starts with Joan Templeton’s observation that modernism’s “chief characteristic was a thoroughgoing revolt against the prevailing order” (1). The author situates this book’s “feminist modernism in relation to both hegemonic modernism and mainstream theatre practice” (4). Performance includes