

doi:10.1017/S0266464X13000158

Helena Grehan

Performance, Ethics, and Spectatorship in a Global Age

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 244 p.
£52.25.

ISBN: 978-0-230-51801-8.

This book offers an extremely readable and engaging investigation of the ethics of spectatorship in a globalized context. Grehan is concerned with performances that create an imperative to respond ethically to the plight of the other, and how such performances introduce new modes of spectatorship by generating an impetus to take 'practical responsibility'. The book features performances that deal with the fallout from industrialized violence, forced removal of peoples, and war and refugee experience; and the analysis is supported by a critical framework derived from Levinasian ethics.

Dynamized by a sense of urgency, the foundational impetus of the book is that, with globalization, diverse sets of publics are increasingly interconnected and implicated by events of crisis and violence against the other. The selected performances provide a useful territory for this exploration, and one of the strengths of the book is the way that it brings together a diverse array of examples that raise ethical questions about spectatorship into one volume. The first chapter offers a Levinas-inspired framework for understanding spectatorship, and this is followed by five chapters that explore a series of performances that 'caused an irritation' in the viewing experience of the author.

These include Società Raffaello Sanzio's production of *Genesis: from the Museum of Sleep* (1999), Black Swan Theatre's *The Career Highlights of the MAMU* (2002), Ong Keng Sen and TheatreWorks *Sandakan Threnody* (2004), and Théâtre du Soleil's production of *Le Dernier Caravansérail* (2003). A final chapter discusses the relationship between performance and changing notions of the 'human', via an analysis of Steve Reich and Beryl Korot's digital opera *Three Tales* (2002) and Patricia Piccinini's visual art installation *Nature's Little Helpers* (2004). This final chapter troubles the Levinasian preoccupation with the call of the human face as an ethical imperative, and sketches out an extension of this framework to include more diverse kinds of others.

Methodologically speaking, the discussion of spectatorship in the book is based on analysis of personal experience, critical reception, and theoretically informed analysis – an approach which left me yearning for more empirical material to back up the key arguments. However, in some ways this methodological choice is also a point of strength – the sections exploring Australian performances were compelling, perhaps because

the author, as an Australian citizen, was directly interpellated by these works. There is a haunting analysis of the performance-spectator encounter offered by the *Sandakan Threnody*, for example, and the account of the production of *Le Dernier Caravansérail*, adapted to include a direct reference to the Tampa incident in 2001, was very affecting. In all, this is a fascinating book which is at times extremely moving in its descriptions of theatre and performance driven by a concern to share responsibility for others in the world who have experienced terrifying events.

JENNY HUGHES

doi:10.1017/S0266464X1300016X

Patrick Lonergan

The Theatre and Films of Martin McDonagh

London: Methuen Drama, 2012. 272 p. £14.99.

ISBN: 978-1-408-13611-9.

Martin McDonagh's theatrical and filmic career has been celebrated by critics for close to two decades. As Patrick Lonergan's entertaining and enjoyable study of the playwright and film-maker points out, academics have frequently been more hostile. Lonergan attempts to re-address this, and encourages readers to move beyond the temptation to view McDonagh's work in a geographically specific location and instead to consider where the responsibility for artistic interpretation lies – with the writer or the audience?

By shifting the focus of his debate away from perennial debates surrounding the authenticity of Irish representation, Lonergan is able to pose much more interesting questions about the relationship between the author and his work, exploring the gap between what a playwright creates and the response provoked in an audience. The text covers all the plays in great detail, from *The Leenane Trilogy* starting in 1996, through his films, and finally looking at McDonagh's most recent play, *A Behanding in Spokane*, which premiered in the US.

Contributions from other scholars are also included, and the second half of the book opens up the discussion to other writers. A conversation with award-winning director Garry Hynes (who has directed much of McDonagh's work and is frequently credited with 'finding' him) kicks off this section but is disappointingly brief and may well have been worth quoting more fully. Other analyses include José Lanter's chapter on post-modernism, Karen O'Brien exploring eco-criticism, Eamonn Jordan on postcolonialism, and Joan Fitzpatrick Dean discussing gender.

These chapters constitute the main area of theoretical analysis, as the remainder of the book is preoccupied with exploring the texts themselves, as Lonergan does meticulously. Throughout the volume, he is at pains to stress the importance of the audience in establishing