

space experienced through theatre practices, understood here as both 'alternative' and 'activist'. This does not include the staging of the state apparatus itself, nor the prevailing repertory of state-subsidized theatres, but interruptions of an attempted monopoly on the cultural definition of civic space. In his essay on the situation in Prague, for instance, Dennis Beck notes the difference between theatre production 'as a response to, rather than a reflection of, postcommunist cultural forces'. He also observes that this offers a 'challenge [to] the passive spectatorial position such forces generate that reprises totalitarianism's disinterest in citizens' responses'.

Such an interplay between communist and postcommunist times is a recurrent theme in all the essays. Discussing critical responses to contemporary theatre in Hungary, for example, Andrea Tompa also notes how these reprise those of former times. In the 1970s, she writes, alternative companies 'were often accused of anarchy, Western influence or emulation of foreign trends, negativism, indecency, and immorality. Ironically, these accusations are similar to the ones that critics and politicians often use against the alternative theatres in Hungary today.' The editorial narrative of presenting artists under the banners of 'freedom of speech' and 'the road to democracy' is not necessarily borne out, then, in interesting ways. In the final essay, for example, questions of staging 'freedom of speech' during the Belarus Free Theatre's 2011 visit to the USA are explored by Margarita Kompelmakher. Quoting the post-colonial translation theorist Naoki Sakai, she questions the suggestion of 'artistic freedom' as a rallying cry 'that transcends borders', where '[Sakai] argues that West-East forms of translation are invested with hegemonic powers that serve "to increase the significance and expressiveness of one's own culture by managing the frontiers with other cultures"'.

Regarding such 'frontiers', it is perhaps indicative that there are no particular examples of staging what used to be called 'the return to Europe', or 'European integration', whether in its affirmation or in its recent demonization by authoritarian populist politicians (in both East and West). Here the editorial concern with values that 'transcend borders' (rather than questioning them) seems a little bit at a tangent to the national focus of the essays themselves. Of course, as with any edited collection, the essays – introducing so many inspiring examples of independent theatre – are varied, and readers will no doubt be attracted to specific chapters as much as to the whole. Perhaps the most positive note is sounded by Péter Esterházy in describing Péter Halász as a 'reality maker', where the relation between art and society – making and reality – is understood as a key to theatre's civic engagement, opening up these potential relations

(as envisaged by the editors) between 'staging' and 'postcommunism'.

MISCHA TWITCHIN

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Jennifer Goodlander

Puppets and Cities: Articulating Identities in Southeast Asia

London: Methuen Drama, 2019. 206 p. £75.00.

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Using examples of puppet genres ranging from the classic to the modern, Jennifer Goodlander explores how puppetry in Southeast Asia is entangled in larger debates of heritage, space, memory, class, temporality and the poetics of national, regional and global identities. In each chapter, she effectively demonstrates how these themes are intricately woven into the urban fabric of places as diverse as Bangkok, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Phnom Penh, and so forth. The writing style is crisp and clear and Goodlander does an excellent job bridging ethnographic observation with theoretical rigour.

A performer herself, Goodlander offers the reader an insider's take on the genre, albeit through the lens of a scholar 'looking in'. Goodlander avoids the jargon that tends to obfuscate many scholarly works, preferring to give credence to a rich ethnographic voice. Each chapter focuses on a number of genres and pertinent issues about identity production and negotiation in the urban spaces of the region. Although all her chapters provide food for thought about the arts, identity, and space in contemporary Southeast Asia, her penultimate chapter stands out. In Chapter 7, Goodlander looks at the role of new media technologies – in particular Facebook, and how puppeteers in Yangon, Malaysia, and Cambodia experience it. This is a fascinating discussion and one, as Goodlander rightly observes, that has not been studied to date. Being part of a cyber mediascape allows performers to encounter others through the 'likes' and 'comments' on their social media pages, and in so doing to rethink their craft in a global and seemingly borderless internet age.

Goodlander emphasizes the multiple landscapes of criss-crossing urban spaces and borders in every chapter as she deftly points out how performances of Cambodian puppetry in New York, Kelantanese Malay Star Wars shadow puppets, and ASEAN-themed puppetry festivals forge new identities for both performers and audiences alike. Her focus is primarily on puppet genres geared to adult audiences and have longer histories in traditional forms. The book does not attempt to discuss all puppet styles in the region. Singapore, for instance, is interestingly left out of the discussion, as are the Philippines. Theatre specialists and anthropology students would appreciate the use of theoretical ideas from these disciplines throughout the text, but students of

history, media, ethnicity, urbanism, and politics would be equally well-placed to read this book.

IRVING CHAN JOHNSON

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Lucía M. Suarez, Amélia Conrado, and Yvonne Daniel
Dancing Bahia: Essays on Afro-Brazilian Dance, Education, Memory, and Race

Bristol: Intellect, 2018, 228 p. £25.00.

ISBN: 978-1-78320-880-7.

Bringing together key representatives of African-Brazilian dance from across the Americas, *Dancing Bahia* combines the voices of artists, activists, and practitioner-scholars in order to explore the complex, intersectional ways in which African-Brazilian dance forms operate within Brazilian society. It focuses on so-called 'African matrix dances': cultural expressions ranging from religious praise performances to martial art forms, social dances, parading dances, modern concert dance, and touristic performance which have developed in Brazil from the colonial period to the present day and whose roots harken back to West and Central Africa. The volume foregrounds the city of Salvador, historically an epicentre of black Brazilian culture, and a former colonial capital. Nearly 80 per cent of the local population identifies as black or multiracial, and the city is famous across Brazil for its dance traditions.

Dancing Bahia reveals how African matrix dances are a product of continued cultural resistance and affirmation. As co-editor Amélia Conrado asserts, African-Brazilian dance is a 'black epistemology' more than a dance genre. Thus, the book unveils the complex layers of (embodied) knowledge underpinning black Brazilian identity and culture. Whilst the role of Candomblé, the African-Brazilian religion of Bahia based on traditional West and Central African praise-performance practices, is rightly foregrounded, space is also given to contemporary dance artistry in Bahia and beyond, and to other black Brazilian traditions, such as the Black Catholicism underpinning the *marabaixo* dance of the Afro-Amapá culture of Brazil's Amazonian region.

The book's main concern is dance education, which reflects how pedagogical activities have enabled African-Brazilian dance practitioners both

to transform their local communities and earn a steady income. Following the legal consolidation of multiculturalism in Brazil in the Federal Constitution of 1988, a number of historic laws were passed under the left-wing government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, in particular Law No. 10.639 of 2003, which requires all schools to teach about African and African-Brazilian culture. In higher education, a system of quotas for Brazilians of African descent was initiated in the 2000s which has transformed access to higher education for black Brazilians. These changes have meant that more professionally trained dance practitioners have been able to work in pedagogic settings and use African matrix dances to challenge the Cartesian biases of colonial and white/modern systems of education, given the focus of African-Brazilian dance on embodied, culturally situated epistemologies. A number of chapters focus on this radical way of rethinking education through the (black Brazilian) body, whilst also weighing up the historically negative ways in which the black body has been essentialized and how this has fed into Salvador's thriving tourist industry, which is also a potential source of income for dancers, thanks to the city's folkloric show circuit.

The transformative potential of these paradigmatic shifts in Brazil's education system is, however, tempered by all of the contributors' accounts of continued systemic racism, which has manifested in a variety of forms, from the postcolonial inequalities of Brazilian society to the historic marginalization of the Brazilian Northeast and the more recent, rapid spread of Neo-Pentecostal Christianity across the country (which rejects African Brazilian praise-practice as ungodly). The impeachment of left-wing President Dilma Rouseff in 2016 and the recent election of a far-right government are also looming spectres that haunt the pages of *Dancing Bahia* and add to the urgency of the dialogues platformed by the book. Thus, whilst this articulate, thought-provoking publication will be an important resource for dance scholars and Latin Americanists, the complexity and richness of the issues tackled mean that *Dancing Bahia* should resonate with anyone interested in the wider diasporic history and culture of the Black Atlantic, in the field of decolonialization, or in the fertile ways in which arts and activism can organically feed into and inform one another.

PATRICK CAMPBELL