own trials and innovations, helped ballet become an American form.

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Singularities: Dance in the Age of Performance

by André Lepecki. 2016. New York: Routledge. 194 pp., 18 photographs. $125.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781138907706.
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In André Lepecki's *Singularities: Dance in the Age of Performance*, "performance" refers broadly to "performances of the self" necessitated by the violent pressures of neoliberalism, intimate and shared (9). Thus, the book does not just concern itself with dances and dancers; it addresses entire social fields generated and sustained by experimental choreographic practices. Lepecki begins with a note distributed by Danish choreographer Mette Ingvartsen at the French premiere of her work *7 Pleasures* five days after the terrorist attacks in and around Paris in November, 2015. Ingvartsen confesses that she and the dancers had considered cancelling, but ultimately decided to proceed in order to "allow the theater to take up its social function of being a place to gather" (2). Lepecki addresses examples that variously propose how artists enact this social function and why dance holds particular promise for transformative performances of selfhood and relationality.

The title's "singularities," a concept drawn from Gilles Deleuze and expanded upon by others, refers to performances engendering multiplicity, strangeness, and irreducibility. Thinking collectivity as singularity allows Lepecki to approach performance without reverting to notions of totality and unity, especially in relation to selfhood. This theoretical move becomes essential to Lepecki's formulation of dance's political potential because it circumvents expectations regarding dancerly expressions of individuality and coherent performances of presence. Five singularities lend Lepecki's chapters flexible interrelated foci: thingness, darkness, animality, persistence, and solidity. Lepecki asserts the prominence of these singularities with respect to "so much recent choreographic imagination," arguing that they offer choreographer, dancer, and spectator alike unique opportunities for criticality (7). The modes of engagement modeled in *Singularities* define a scope for performance outside of the term's association with corporate efficiency, compulsive self-display, and the commodification of personhood, in particular, via social networking.

As Lepecki's second single-authored volume, *Singularities* builds upon many of the conceptual and methodological interests established in his immensely influential *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (2006). First, Lepecki remains in dialogue with Western philosophy (especially aesthetic and political philosophies), including Deleuze as well as Georges Didi-Huberman, Giorgio Agamben, Jacques Rancière, Peter Sloterdijk, and many others. Second, he continues to draw interdisciplinary connections between dance studies and performance studies, cultural studies, art history, and critical race studies. Finally, he maintains a focus on early twenty-first-century works emerging from Europe and the Americas. *Singularities* brings together substantial new writing with updated versions of three texts published elsewhere. This includes, notably, a revision of "The Body as Archive: Will to Reenact and the Afterlives of Dances," an essay that has (since its 2010 appearance in this journal) proven invaluable to scholars working through productive tensions between corporeality and the archive.

Lepecki opens *Singularities* with an astounding eruption of *thingness*, narrating,

among other examples, his experience of a performance by the Colombian artist María José Arjona. In June 2009, Lepecki curated Arjona's multipart *White Series* (2004–2009) in Berlin's IN TRANSIT festival, which included a durational component to be enacted for several hours over the festival's first five days. While the opening performance goes tremendously awry, Lepecki witnesses an inarguably precise manifestation of an assertion from Fred Moten and Stefano Harney: "Some people want to run things, other things want to run" (Harney and Moten 2013, 51). I do not want to spoil the reader's surprise, but I will say that Arjona triggers an exquisite meditation on the ungovernable singularity of thingness manifested through the quasi-object of the freshly blown, quivering, soap bubble.

In the next chapter, Lepecki undertakes a piercing critique of the Western philosophical enchantment with light, its "constitutive photophilia" (59). Again he draws heavily on Moten as well as on the art historian Darby English. From within this dialogue, Lepecki asserts an "aesthetic-racist unconscious sustaining a whole political formation that abhors (racial) blackness as (civilizational) darkness and (reason's) derangement" (59). The links between blackness, darkness, and enlightenment rationalities are more than convincing. The choreographic examples Lepecki chooses, however, support a formulation of blackness as an ontological category quite distinct from the lived experience of racialized subjectivity. Only one of the four examples represents a choreographer (Marcelo Evelin) "connecting darkness with the onto-political force of racial blackness" (61). My initial concern was that blackness so abstracted would serve as a redemptive force, valuable insofar as it might salve neoliberalism's white discontents. But Lepecki stresses that it is important that darkness (and, one assumes, blackness) "might resist being used as a vehicle" —and certainly not a vehicle leading to further stages of enlightenment (66).

Subsequent chapters delve more forcefully into the territory of lived blackness. After opening the third chapter with a discussion of the Derridean "limitrophy" between human and animal, Lepecki discusses a performance by Marcela Levi and Lucía Russo that explicitly references the cakewalk. And Lepecki's final chapter engages with the collaboration between Ralph Lemon and Walter Carter, a former sharecropper from Yazoo City, Mississippi. Lepecki explores and explodes Lemon's vision of Carter as a Benjaminian "angel of history," linking their choreographic collaboration to a discussion of sixteenth-century physics in order to address the linked choreopolitical imperatives of ahistoricity and kinetic flow. Lepecki sees the potential in Carter as a specifically black "angel of history" for exhibiting "interfering agency," agency that is not freedom but rather *persistence*, a firm entrenchment in place and time.

Carter's context is, of course, the American South, where he can be seen in Lemon's *1856 Cessna Road* "roaming about" through a landscape that is "all rust and dirt, depopulated" (165). Carter's postindustrial South is a distinct evocation of the ongoing global "crime scene" wrought by capitalism, colonialism, and racism. In his conclusion, Lepecki works from Sloterdijk's assertion that contemporary subjectivity makes one an accomplice to this massive crime. In response, Lepecki transforms Sloterdijk's accomplice into a witness, finishing *Singularities* with an earnest demand that audiences relinquish aesthetic judgements and take up the "responsibility of caring for a performance's afterlives" (172). Lepecki clearly sees a horizon, forcefully opened up by choreographic practice, where dance invests in a politically potent and resistive public sphere, sharply focused on singularity *and* collectivity.

Throughout *Singularities*, Lepecki evidences theoretical and analytical rigor, effortlessly shifting from detailed descriptions of performances to complex conceptual infrastructures. Yet the writing also feels personal. The reader gains vivid impressions, for example, of his experiences as curator, spectator, and interlocutor. Moreover, he seems to take dramaturgical cues from strands of experimental performance itself, with ideas receding only to emerge in new contexts, transformed. The focus is less on chapter-by-chapter resolution than on a slowly emerging fullness, with multiple points of connection linking seemingly disparate ideas and images. Indeed, Lepecki also produces a forceful statement on the interrelatedness of scholarly and choreographic theories, which are "always co-made in the space between artistic-performative practices and critical-discursive ones" (18). Such interdependency is

vital if we (as artists and scholars) are committed to the revelatory efficacy of bodies—in the streets and on stages as well as in the academy.

At only a few points did I sense Lepecki's evident theoretical commitments dominating artistic practices. In his chapter on thingness, for example, he positions Simone Forti's dance constructions as a less than fully articulated precursor to Yvonne Rainer's and Robert Morris's explorations of dance and objecthood. This might reflect more forceful academic-discursive statements by Rainer and Morris, duly cited by Lepecki (see Rainer in Battcock [1968] and Morris [1965]). As another example, Lepecki's predilection for the low, the slow, and the still leads him to overlook, in Lemon's case, a crucial instance of hyperkineticism. While Lepecki addresses Lemon's *How Can You Stay in the House All Day and Not Go Anywhere?*, he makes no mention of a 20-minute long section wherein dancers move continuously and riotously, a potentially rich avenue in light of his argument. And finally, his attention to dance in visual arts contexts makes perfect sense with respect to its ever-increasing visibility therein. What is less methodologically clear is how that heightened visibility inherently signals critical relevancy (7). Dance's imbrication in a field marked by the hyperkineticism of capital does not necessarily indicate reflection on states of precarity ensured by neoliberalism, but may signal artists' efforts to escape them.

It is precisely this widespread sense of precarity and our constant state of political emergency that make Lepecki's work so essential. As I write, it is one day after the white nationalist rally and terrorist attack in Charlottesville, Virginia. Like Ingvartsen, I feel it is hard to go on. But go on we do, and it seems imperative to bring to bear all of the scholarly, critical, and choreographic resources we have in these unbearable times. Lepecki insists upon the importance of dance in the age of performance, and his work is an important resource for those attuned to the singularity of inhuman dances, dances that persist, unrecognizable dances, dances in the darkness. He celebrates these not as solutions or arrival points, but as sources of hope and as urgent calls to redefine modes of being together.

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