

the second (by Faedra Chatard Carpenter) is with Liz Diamond, Parks's frequent collaborator. Diamond's thoughts on Parks are particularly engrossing, especially her discussion of the challenges surrounding the direction of Parks's plays. Diamond suggests looking to Parks's wit and wordplay as a way into her work; an award-winning, groundbreaking writer can be profound and goofy by turns.

The detailed production history, compiled by Richard E. Kramer, begins with *The Sinner's Place*, Parks's thesis production at Mount Holyoke in 1984, and moves through *The Book of Grace*, which opened in 2010 at the Public Theater in New York. It also lists Parks's projects in development, such as screen-play adaptations of Toni Morrison's novel *Paradise* and Ira Glass's *This American Life*. The production history is a fitting end to the collection: in looking back over Parks's history and forward to her multiple future projects, it shows us Parks in medias res. As the writers in this text suggest with perspicacity, the past may be just a taste of what is to come.

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Urban Bush Women: Twenty Years of African American Dance Theater, Community Engagement, and Working It Out. By Nadine George-Graves. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010; pp. 296, 38 illustrations. \$29.95 paper, \$18.95 e-book.

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Reviewed by Hillary Miller, CUNY Graduate Center

In *Urban Bush Women: Twenty Years of African American Dance Theater, Community Engagement, and Working It Out*, Nadine George-Graves provides a comprehensive history of this Brooklyn-based contemporary dance troupe founded by Artistic Director Jawole Willa Jo Zollar. George-Graves investigates the salience of “work” in the context of Urban Bush Women: What works in the rehearsal room, and why? How do we work *through* choreography, and how do performers “work” an audience? How does the company's improvisatory style allow the individual dancer to *work it*? Taking a cue from her subject, George-Graves adopts a spirit of exploration to work through the group's process, products, and reception.

The author begins by introducing the company's development process and style before isolating in chapters five guiding elements of their work: “The Body,” “The Word,” “The World,” “The Soul,” and “The Community.” Although these divisions at first seem an odd organizational choice for a book about a company known for its fluid incorporation of disparate elements, it allows for a forensic approach to a complex aesthetic. George-Graves identifies character motifs that reverberate across every chapter: “finding the strength to survive adversity; calling upon the spirits and ancestors; overcoming violence and pain; reclaiming heritage, history, legacy, and memory; claiming agency and authenticity over the female identity (voice, body, and spirit); using the personal to connect with the universal; connecting to everyday life; and connecting to others” (35). Using dance as a

mechanism to address these issues, Urban Bush Women activate their audiences by changing what it means to watch certain bodies perform. George-Graves argues throughout that this strategy challenges notions of fixed identities, renouncing and reimagining old visions of society and of blackness.

Ritual, range, and improvisation have remained key elements throughout the nearly twenty-eight-year performance history of Urban Bush Women. In Chapter 1, "Development: Core Values, Process, and Style," George-Graves addresses Zollar's embrace of dancers with body types that deviate from the norm of professional dance aesthetics. The company's commitment to expression over "selling" manifests itself in a radically democratic approach to the body types, ages, and athletic abilities represented. This simultaneously alters the understanding of dance held by both audience members and performers. In Chapter 2, "The Body: Divided and Conquered," George-Graves notes that by resisting, commenting on, and referencing representations of oversexualized women of color, Zollar "redivides and reconquers the black body through dance" in a postcolonial project that "reaffirms African Americans' sovereignty over their own bodies" (42).

In Chapter 3, "The Word: Black Magic Realism," the company's use of linear and circular narratives is revealed to be a crucial aspect of Zollar's departure from the tenets of postmodern dance. In Chapter 4, "The World: Shelter from the Heat," George-Graves highlights the company's engagement with "the lives of women in a violent and misogynistic world, the relationships they foster, their survival strategies, and their strategies for negotiating through systems that devalue them" (105). While these are engaging and thoroughly researched sections, the most significant contributions can be found in the final two chapters of the book. George-Graves marshals previous scholarship on the arts and community engagement to analyze the company's extraperformance work. Chapter 5, "The Soul: The Spirit Moves," looks at Zollar's embrace of the church and transcendence as George-Graves examines the liturgical dance workshop, a dance ministry that engages "those who want to use movement to proclaim their faith" (136). In Chapter 6, "The Community: In Theory and Practice," her analysis of the company's projects in Tallahassee, Florida and Flint, Michigan supports her claim that the troupe perfected "a mechanism to do things with bodies that move spectators to reconsider movement, activism in the arts, and the role of dance in projects of social healing, awareness, and change" (35).

There is, however, one level of understanding of the "work" of Urban Bush Women that is not addressed in this text: work as labor, placed within the larger contexts of cultural production. How did Zollar steer the company away from the minefields of "selling" in order to flourish artistically while surviving financially for more than a quarter century? Did conflicts arise among the group's core values, community goals, and material realities? This line of inquiry would not diminish the aesthetic, spiritual, and political successes of the company; on the contrary, it would augment our knowledge of Zollar as a dynamic impresario. It seems indisputable that the company cultivated organizational strengths that worked in tandem with its philosophy, techniques, and artistic approaches. Including this information would have illuminated the myriad innovations that

sustained its long trajectory and allowed the company to persevere amid the arts-funding landscape.

George-Graves carefully showcases the complexity of messages emanating from this female-driven ensemble whose work is often pigeonholed or mischaracterized as radical, as angry, or as “lesbian” theatre (a mislabel George-Graves confronts in an early chapter). She demonstrates how Zollar successfully meshed the basic building blocks of choreography—music, emotions, and rhythm—with movement, genre, collaboration, and content. The result “creates an aesthetic that pushes dance past a cool disinterest and unabashedly into social discourse” (5). In George-Graves’s formulation, community is not an abstract concept for Urban Bush Women, nor is it an afterthought to their performance work; rather, it motivates the very foundations of the company’s ethics and aesthetics. This is a markedly different approach from the outreach initiatives of many companies, for whom community engagement is a means to a financial end. George-Graves deserves extensive praise for adeptly balancing the politically activist and resistive elements of the troupe with its spiritual dimensions, womanist philosophy, and innovative community engagement.

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Male Trouble: Masculinity and the Performance of Crisis. By Fintan Walsh. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; pp. 234. \$80.00 cloth. doi:10.1017/S0040557411000895

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The notion of masculinity in crisis has long held both cultural and social currency in the modern and postmodern eras. However, it is only in the past two decades that the broader study of men and masculinities has made some small inroads into theatrical, film, visual art, and cultural studies. Until recently, for the scholar of masculinities in these fields, there has been a distinct lack of critical material, with researchers in the arts all too often finding themselves consulting social science journals or wandering over to the sociology sections of their libraries. Fintan Walsh’s *Male Trouble: Masculinity and the Performance of Crisis* addresses this lacuna in a broad, complex, and interdisciplinary manner by examining the concept of masculinity in crisis in several performing art forms: live art, film, drama and theatre, social happenings, and public spectacle.

Walsh’s book is heavily inflected by psychoanalytic and queer theory; indeed, he informs the reader quite early on not only that his title *Male Trouble* is drawn from Judith Butler’s polemical *Gender Trouble* (Routledge, 1990), but also that his work is driven by a series of scholarly interventions in the area of masculinity and queer studies, citing Lynne Segal, Michael D. Snediker, Bracha Ettinger, and Susan Faludi among others as the direct impetus for his research. However, the psychoanalytic and queer slant to his writing should not deter any readers who themselves may not be heavily invested in such critical paradigms. Throughout his culturally and theoretically enlightening introduction, Walsh