***Performance and Place*, Leslie Hill and Helen Paris (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).**

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It is a truism of post-modern culture that any sense we have of a local place is at risk of being replaced by the bland blend of globalised 'placelessness', with its super-brands of Coca Cola, Nike, The Gap, Starbucks etc. Performance and Place discusses the intersections between this broader cultural concept of place and the specific, literal spaces in which we enact our performances, whether they are theatres, galleries or warehouses. It is perhaps both ironic and indicative that in a book that centres on 'place', the strongest sense of a location I have after reading this book is of a keyboard and screen. Of course, this is exactly the point: in this new, digitalized culture, place is a proverbial moveable feast, and the body of the performer often a fast-disappearing trace on a computer monitor. Here Phillip Auslander's important comment, cited here by the appropriately named Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, that 'the general response of live performance to the oppression and economic superiority of mediated forms has been to become as much like them as possible' (166) is particularly apt. These performances adapt the tools of global disappearance or 'placelessness' to re-inscribe specific, if ephemeral, bodies and locations; sites of human dialogue, resistance and survival. However, I must say, when Parker-Starbuck asks in the title of her contribution to this book, whether we are 'Lost in Space?' (155), this book has not filled me with the confidence to answer in the negative.

One of the concepts that runs as a motif through this collection is Marc Augé's notion of supermodernity's 'non-places' (76). Non-places are functional spaces we pass through on the way to somewhere else, even though, as in the case of refugee camps, we may be in these spaces all our lives. Airport lounges, highways, supermarkets and hotel chains: these are places where we are structured as travellers or even tourists, and the places themselves are emptied of any presence or purpose beyond their relation to specific, external ends. It is characteristic of supermodernity that we spend a large part

of our lives in transit, in such 'non-places'. This sense of 'placelessness' is the crisis to which much of this book speaks.

A real strength of Performance and Place is its diversity: it discusses examples of work that stretch across the landscape from classical theatre to performance art; and features writing from curators, practitioners and theorists - not that these are always separate categories. The book is divided into five sections. The first, 'Mapping the Territory' is especially welcome: its contributors are those whose job-description is 'placing' performances, such as curators and gallery directors. The second section, '[Dis]placing the Senses', explores a key issue for theorists of performance and place; that is, the connection between the body, as one vehicle for 'live performance', and the 'virtual' place of much contemporary work. The third section, 'On Location', has more of the smell of the 'Real' about it, because it deals directly with 'geography and psychogeography' in performances from specific sites around the world. The fourth section, and the one I found most useful, is called 'Border Panic', and examines works which attempt to cross boundaries of place, both political and personal. Finally, the last section, and for me the most unified in terms of its content, is evocatively titled 'Theatre in a Crowded Fire', and discusses performances centring on the relationships between architecture, performance and place.

In a menu as large and tasty as this, it is impossible to discuss every offering. For me there were a number of standout performances, and these were often the ones that were less descriptive and more analytical, or combined both kinds of writing most lucidly. Emily Putthof, in 'Patina of Placelessness', explores the way in which cyber-performance is itself often located in a 'non-place', through a discussion of the proliferation of "'bots'" on the web; that is, computer programs that can 'act autonomously' as 'agents' (80). She also talks about the 'strangely paradoxical. … Increased migration of live artists into cyberspace' (78). Commenting on this paradox, she notes that 'the very concept of a "unique presence" of the live performer is jeopardized. I believe this is what makes cyberspace particularly dangerous and alluring. Live artists are drawn in by the opportunity to test the boundaries of live art by

putting it in danger. The placeless performer forgoes the threat of being captured for the desire to spotlight the very essence of being 'live''(79).

Further exploring the issue of the 'non-place', Parker-Starbuck discusses a performance which uses that most annoying of globalisation's monster-children, the international call-centre. After a discussion which focuses on Auge´'s idea of 'non-place', Parker-Starbuck states provocatively, as a response to Auslander's comment above, that the 'face-to-face encounter' in live performance 'remains ontologically and ethically a different space from the non- space' (166). Ironically, if cyber-performance is a movement through non-space, it still seems to need some sense of 'liveness'; it has not, she notes forced 'us out of the theatre altogether' (166).

Amongst those papers which featured more specific, non-virtual locations, I found Laurie Beth Clark's discussion of 'trauma memorials' particularly interesting. Noting the proliferation of 'impromptu shrines' after September 11, Clark shows how formal memorial 'places' are 'contested' by informal, individual performances of grief and memory (129). She examines a number of these memorials, including Anne Frank House, the slave forts at Cape Coast and Elmina in Ghana as well as the peace parks at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as performances, as mediated experiences for spectators. Some of these performances are 'placed' at the site of particular historical trauma (like concentration camps), and others are displaced reconstructions, such as the Holocaust memorials in the U.S.A. and Europe. She ends by noting that, whatever the designers of the September 11 memorial might attempt to commemorate, what the people who visit the site will do will 'somehow be different, in subtle yet meaningful ways, from what the structure officially allows' (137).

Another paper which explores the contesting of official, hegemonic space is L.M. Bogad's discussion of the attempt by 'street theatre/media intervention group'- please, let there be a proliferation of such groups - The Billionaires for Bush to 'invade' the heavily mediated space of the 2004 Republication National Convention. Bogad begins by poetically noting that 'Public protest is

out of place in the United States. It has no place. It is on the run, running in place, running out of space' (170). Defying the Convention's 'Orwellian' efforts to contain dissent within official 'Free Speech Zones', The Billionaires, and other groups such as The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army, use old-fashioned mobile guerrilla theatre, as well as digital media, to stage their incursion into the restricted spaces of globalisation (173).

Similarly, Paul Heritage's account of his own experience of 'border panic' whilst producing Shakespeare in the favelas of Rio was also fascinating. In the war-zone of a so-called 'divided city', Heritage's project resulted in a cease fire between warring drug gangs of eighteen days, and the informal construction of a kind of public 'Third sector', where crossings and inter-sections between the worlds of the dispossessed and the 'official' State city could occur (205). Moreover, those musical and theatrical groups which were used in the performance have themselves become established NGOS, working on behalf of the non-citizens of the favelas (205). These developments are much more important than the content of the performance: here the 'site' of a performance is productively seen not only as the stage itself, but the whole social, political and historical location of that stage. Heritage rightly notes both the success and failure of this neo-classical, and foreign, intervention, and evocatively acknowledges the power of the 'silence' that surrounds the performance: the silence of the gangs' gunfire during the ceasefire, and the silence of the State in its failure to address the issues highlighted by the performance (206).

In the last section, 'Theatre in a Crowded Fire', there are examples where the borders of academic writing themselves are performatively breached. Andrew Kötting's 'Hidey-hole and Inner Sanctum', an attempt to commit to paper an 'in one day, and unmediated-mediated everything there-is-to-say' about issues of performance, placelessness and location, disperses the tight structure of formal analysis with a piece of nomadic performance writing (234). This is what Leslie Hill beautifully calls 'pulses of thought' from Kötting's own place, a 'remote farmhouse in the Pyrenees', mediated by the fire-light of his laptop.

Here, as so often in this collection, place and cyber-performance meet in interesting encounters.

In many ways, these artists are continuing the work of Walter Benjamin and Henri Lefebvre, as well as that of Augé, in attempting to interrogate intersections between location, identity, reality and art in an age where these concepts are always mutable and multiple (5). The danger here, as so many of these contributors note, is that in attempting to use weapons of cyber-reality against itself, in order to salvage some trace of 'liveness' in art, the result is not the almost-free nomadically transgressing performer/actor/writer, but a kind of trapped, dismembered, 'de-composed' ghost. In his contribution, Johannes Birringer shows how it may be possible to see this 'de-composition' as productive within his project's performative re-inhabiting of a disused coal mine, where the local is 'understood not as sedimented history but as data mine, a recordable source that can be changed in the post-processing' (89). Birringer posits a model of a performance which is a kind of place where 'the user'—the spectator now also a performer—can in some ways construct their own virtual and specific place, a place awaiting the next user, as 'it is always becoming and never completed' (90). I want to stress that Birringer's discussion is well aware of the pitfalls of supermodern utopian hyperbole, and his discussion of his project is both critical and complex.

I will end with some qualifications to my overall enthusiastic response to this collection. Some of these papers, especially those by the curators and directors, tend to be too descriptive. These contributions are also those, which are the thickest with undigested theoretical jargon. I wanted a longer, more lucidly analytic discussion of the ¨works they address. In a collection where performance art is almost predominantly featured, I would have liked more, and better, visual aids! The pictures here are quite disappointing, and did not really help me in re-imagining these exciting performances.

Like any good smorgasbord, there is something here for every taste. What these offerings show is that the question of the place of 'place' in contemporary performance is still a vital, productive and very vexed issue.

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