

***Reasoning Madness: The Reception and Performance of Euripides' Herakles* by Kathleen Riley.**

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 367 pp. (hardback)

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Euripides' *Herakles* is a structurally challenging play, with a family-in-peril first movement that seems to be resolved by the timely return of a triumphant Herakles. This comfortingly predictable narrative is shattered by the appearance of Iris (Hera's vengeful emissary) and Lyssa ('frenzy'), who transform the returned Herakles into a crazed, delusional killer who murders his own wife and children.

In *Reasoning Madness*, Kathleen Riley is keen to counter the assumption of Euripides' structural detractors that the explanation for Herakles' crimes ought to be inherent in the legitimised violence of his earlier heroics, electing rather to 'search for meaning in the play's structural dislocation' (23). She argues that 'a strategy of disunity is essential to Euripides' ground-breaking externalization of Herakles' madness and to his even more ground-breaking humanization of Herakles' heroism' (24). In Riley's interpretation of *Herakles*, the drama concludes with an effectively 'demythologized' hero, 'who protests against divine amoral indifference' and belatedly recognises that 'only human endurance and human *philia* matter' (45). This reading invests the grieving Herakles with a distinctly humane grandeur, realised in opposition to a pagan pantheon wreaking unpredictable havoc in human lives. Reasoning madness, the author suggests, is precisely what Euripides *does not do* in his handling of the Herakles myth.

Riley thus discerns a crucial distinction between the Herakles of Euripides and his subsequent stage incarnations, the majority of which, she argues, are fundamentally informed by 'a process of reasoning the madness and psychologising

the hero' which begins in the first century AD with Seneca's *Hercules Furens* (45). Chapter 2 ('Seneca and the Internalization of Imperial *Furor*') places *Hercules Furens* within the context of Imperial Rome and 'the ambivalent achievement of Empire,' highlighting Seneca's un-Euripidean emphasis upon psychological causality, and the way in which the Roman Hercules' tragedy stems from a personality 'unbalanced by megalomania' (54). Speculating intriguingly that Seneca might have conceived his reworking of Euripides 'as a seasonable and salutary warning' to an adolescent Nero about 'the importance of moderate government and self-restraint' (57), Riley suggests that this is the moment at which Herakles' madness shifts from being the external work of malicious immortals to become the inevitable psychological outcome of 'the *furor* of imperial achievement and absolute power ... unmitigated by self-knowledge or self-mastery' (90).

The volume proposes and analyses several other key moments in the reception and transformation of the Euripidean Herakles. Chapter 4 explores 'Herculean Selfhood on the Elizabethan Stage,' sketching the theatre's enthusiastic adoption of Seneca's self-aggrandising over-reacher as a 'psychological portrait of power' in an age of self-fashioning Tudor monarchs wielding 'unprecedented authority' (118), characterising Othello and Nick Bottom as two contradictory currents within a general stream of Senecan, rather than Euripidean, dramaturgy. Chapter 6 ('The Browning Version') presents Robert Browning as a solitary and under-appreciated defender of Euripides' original design, restoring the play's 'dramatic and moral essence' in his 1875 *Aristophanes' Apology* (206). Chapter 7 ('Herakles' Lost Self and the Creation of *Nervenkunst*') plunges the reader into *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, where avant-garde aesthetics coalesce with nascent Freudian psychoanalysis in the fascinated contemplation of a 'dark and dangerous Heraklean psychology,' the development of a

‘Herakles complex’ (278), and the diagnosis of the modernist Herakles with the same neurotic symptoms as the protagonists of von Hofmannsthal’s *Nervenkunst Elektra* (208).

Chapters 9 and 10, focussed on the more recent life of *Herakles* in performance, continue the theme of the theatrical preference for Senecan psychologising over Euripides’ supernatural explanation for the hero’s violent madness. Riley analyses Archibald McLeish’s 1965 *Herakles* as an exploration of Cold War fears about technology, masculinity, militarisation and the terrifying ease with which lethal destruction can be unloosed on both a personal and planetary scale (302). Her discussion of Simon Armitage’s 2001 *Mister Hercules* reveals that many of the same preoccupations continue to define the performance reception of *Herakles* today, which is predominantly concerned with exploring ‘the cultural psychology of militarism and masculinity and the problem, above all, of trained killers adapting to civilized and civilian society’ (314). These and other recent reworkings of Euripides’ *Herakles*, Riley contends, ‘have substantially reconfigured the madness itself, internalizing and rationalizing it,’ causing the Greek hero to assume ‘an intriguing un-Hellenic aspect’ as an ambivalent figure of latent violence, repressed trauma and ‘neo-Senecan’ mental unbalance (337).

Although *Reasoning Madness* is described as a history of Euripides’ *Herakles*, it’s Seneca’s more troubled, troubling hero who seems to occupy the bulk of the book’s analysis. As Riley concedes, ‘it is actually the Romanized Greek hero, the morally and psychologically problematic Senecan Herakles that appears to have caught the cultural imagination of the early twenty-first century, and to have become a potent emblem for the new nihilism and humanity’s age-old capacity for self-destruction’ (348). Throughout the book, a striking rift between academy and

dramaturgy is in evidence, with a classicist's reading of Euripides' dramatic purpose at odds with the demands of the contemporary stage for a psychologically plausible neo-Senecan Herakles to function as a locus for explorations of 'the hero's habitual aggression,' and the 'particular cultural imperatives' which cause him to be 'at war with himself, his dependants, and his society' (281).

Whilst acknowledging a personal preference for the Euripidean Herakles, Riley's wide-ranging and thoughtful narrative examines the multiple frames of cultural reference which have re-defined the ancient drama in different times and places. Descriptive rather than dogmatic, *Reasoning Madness* provides a fascinating account of the ongoing negotiation between scholarship and stage regarding the nature and meaning of Herakles' tragic madness.

***The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle, Sexualities* by Ramsay Burt**

Second Edition, New York: Routledge, 2007, 228 pp. (paperback)

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In 1995, Routledge published Ramsay Burt's *The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle, Sexualities* which quickly became essential reading for the developing fields of dance studies and gender studies. Burt's interrogation of the male dancer in western professional dance traditions, starting with Diaghilev, offered one of the first theoretical accounts examining the socio-historical tensions surrounding masculinity, homosexuality and the spectatorship of male dancers. Burt's 2007 revised edition represents a promising development from his original work, yet, at the same time, stages a curious retreat from some of his earlier convictions.

Despite the plethora of books now available on gender and sexuality, *The Male Dancer* still offers one of the most comprehensive studies of the masculinity of

auteur dancers of the twentieth century. By no means an exhaustive account, it nonetheless covers some of the most critically received dancers of the twentieth century, including Nijinsky, Bill T Jones, Mark Morris, Steve Paxton, Jose Limón, Alvin Ailey, Joe Goode, and many more.

The opening chapter on Nijinsky, 'The Trouble with the Male Dancer,' remains relatively unchanged since the first edition, despite a shift in order and the subtraction of psychoanalysis. Building on Nancy Chodorow's theories, Burt once claimed masculine identity had its 'roots in repressed memories of developmental stages' (198). In the new version however, Burt writes, 'I have cut all the references to psychoanalysis' not because it lacks value, but because it receives resistance and 'this is not the best place to advocate it' (xi). Burt's exclusion of psychoanalysis, I would argue, sharpens his analysis, which is more about the cultural frames of spectatorship, rather than individual psyches or an artist's 'choreographer-oriented approach' (xii). Indeed, Burt's ambitious project succeeds most when it focuses on how perceptions of the male dancer expose fissures within larger societal notions of heterorthodoxy.

The second chapter, 'Looking at the Male,' is particularly enhanced with new scholarship and an acute sense of the challenge facing performance scholars. For example, '[t]he signs and traces of embodied behaviour,' Burt writes, 'which inform the conventions of theatre dance, may not be reducible to language, but they only signify meaning because they constitute a non-verbal discourse' (40). Burt also uses elements of queer theory and performative speech act theory to further untangle the knots of gender and sexuality. But his use of queer theory is limited here especially when compared to his impressive (and more thorough) chapter, 'Dissolving in

Pleasure: The Threat of the Queer Male Dancing Body' published in Jane Desmond's *Dancing Desires* (2001).

The middle chapters are a combination of the old edition and new scholarship. 'American Men' (chapter four) looks at Ted Shawn, Martha Graham's men, and Jose Limón. 'Dancing in the City' (chapter five) is a lively discussion that places the works of Merce Cunningham, Alvin Ailey and Steve Paxton in relation to metropolitan life. 'Masculinity and Liberation' (chapter six) and 'Identity Politics' (chapter seven) are both refreshing additions and respond to more recent discussions on HIV, gender and dance. It is, perhaps, Burt's chapter on identity politics which is the most provocative: 'While neither [Joe Goode's] *29 Effeminate Gestures* nor DV8's *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men* directly addressed the issue of AIDS,' Burt writes, 'both were clearly produced when that was one of the most urgent issues facing gay men' (172). Here, Burt begins to identify the lack of overt politicalization of HIV and male sexuality within 1990s dance.

During this time, Burt writes, Mark Morris 'no longer felt pressed . . . to make overt gender statements as he once did' and pieces like Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* were 'playing down sexuality,' effectively undoing 'all the advances which other gay artists had made in the previous decade' (177-178). In exchange for explicit expressions of political affirmation, Burt contends, dance pieces of the 1990s and early 2000s presented a challenge to 'the spectator to actively engage in finding new ways of interpreting their performances' (180). Despite identifying the de-politicization of male dance during this time and how previous gay "advances" were forsaken, Burt seems to accept this change as an inevitable 'post-men' aesthetic rather than a gesture of self-censorship under the pressures of heterosexism.

In the preface of the new edition, Burt's similarly de-politicized stance – and the book's conclusion – is foreshadowed when he suggests, 'it no longer seems appropriate to single out male gender and sexuality for special treatment.' He hopes, instead, that his work will lead to deeper examinations of gender and sexuality within broader social and political contexts (xii). Although Burt's latter point is salient, as indeed, *The Male Dancer* significantly contributes to a range of academic fields, the comment which seems to dismiss the 'special treatment' of gender and sexuality is puzzling. Burt's new position undermines the importance he once invested in his first edition which alerted us to the 'dangerous lack' of scholarship on male gender. Granted, the field of gender and sexuality studies has mushroomed since then, so perhaps Burt is now calling for the privileging of other under-examined areas. Nonetheless, in an updated book which pays special attention to gender and sexuality, Burt's stance is somewhat contradictory.

Burt's final chapter, 'Post Men,' is similar to the preface in that he continues to dismiss the stigma still surrounding male dancers. On the contrary, he contends, 'male dancers are no longer the source of anxiety that they have been in the recent past' (208). Burt suggests instead that male dance should be 'part of the wider project of understanding how intimately theatre dance is linked to the society which produces and consumes it' (208). With such a positive conclusion, one wonders how a consideration of recent developments in televised theatrical dance might enrich or complicate Burt's project.

One striking example is the wildly popular American TV competition show, *So You Think You Can Dance*, where young males are derided when their dance movements are perceived as being too feminine. Other examples come from reality-audition TV shows, particularly those for musicals like *Oliver! (I'd Do Anything)*,

which often feature narratives of boys who are stigmatized at home because of their dance affiliations. Surely, this makes the case that anxieties around males dancing still proliferate and deserve ‘special attention.’ On one level, such shows reflect a broader inclusiveness of non-normative male gender expression, but they by no means signal the end of the cultural and scholarly projects devoted to rescuing non-normative gender from the marginalizing restrictions of homophobia and heterosexism.

Conversely, I would argue that as certain forms of male dance are increasingly absorbed into mainstream culture, it becomes more important to apply critical scrutiny to notions of gender and sexuality. These recent examples are out of the scope of Burt’s project but significantly problematize some of his assertions. Nevertheless, Burt’s classic and now rejuvenated *The Male Dancer* still represents a valuable contribution to gender and sexuality studies and does not fail to inspire the continued scholarly attention that gender and sexuality still demand.

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***Performance Practice and Process: Contemporary [Women] Practitioners* by Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris**

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 194 pp. (paperback)

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The overarching theme of this work is that of the joy, necessity and reciprocity of [women’s] creative collaboration. *Performance Practice and Process: Contemporary*

[Women] Practitioners is a successful attempt to “get inside” the practice of eight [female] practitioners who work and write for a range of performance disciplines. The use of square brackets indicates the gendered terminology of ‘woman’ as an ‘expansive and contingent category’ (1) and the term ‘writing’ is widely applied – ‘beyond text’ – from scriptwriting for radio to body-based live art. Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris’s practice-based methodology emerged out of a three year AHRC-funded project researching ‘the performance-making strategies of a number of artists for whom resistant gender practice is in some way important to their creativity’ (1). This ‘insider’ research was conducted through a series of practitioner-led workshops as well as artist interviews.

The book details the experience of eight practitioner-led workshops, providing insight into the creative methods of each of the following: live-artist Bobby Baker; performance artists Helen Paris and Leslie Hill, who together form Curious; performance poet SuAndi; radio playwright Sarah Daniels; performance company Split Britches; playwright Rebecca Prichard; storyteller Vayu Naidu; and stand-up comic Jenny Eclair. Each practitioner has their own chapter, and all the discussion is framed within the theoretical position of resistant gendered practice. The research is unprecedented in the access it provides into the creative processes of these artists through Aston and Harris’s position as participant observers.

The material in the book will serve as a useful resource for teachers, students and makers of performance in a firmly pragmatic way. Ideas for starting points from which to make gender-aware work are presented throughout the text. For example, Aston and Harris describe Split Britches’ notion of making a ‘personal inventory’ to help focus on the moment and use ‘what they are feeling, seeing, smelling or thinking about at that moment [...] eventually focussing on something in the space that

“reminded us of something else” which we then took as a writing exercise’ (111). This technique reminds the practitioner to use what is there, immediate and available to create work: a simple idea that is easy to lose sight of in the fog of trying to produce material for performance. *Performance Practice and Process* is supported by an archival website that includes images, film footage and practice exemplars that enable it to go ‘beyond text’ itself and greatly facilitates its usefulness as a resource.

Aston and Harris discuss performance poet, SuAndi’s strategies of adjusting her set according to the particular context and audience that she finds herself in each time she performs and of ‘making an entrance.’ They cite SuAndi as saying ‘I like to sit at the back of the room and work out what is going on’ (71), highlighting her flexibility and an improvisatory approach to the performance material. Again, in relation to SuAndi, Aston and Harris state that ‘part of SuAndi’s “art” lies in “shaping” the performance *as a whole*’ (72, emphasis in original). They also explore SuAndi’s strategy of blurring the boundaries between poet, poem, character and performance. She ‘segues into the poem usually without marking the transition and sometimes without an immediately perceptible change of tone’ (72). According to Aston and Harris, this boundary-blurring ‘questions assumptions about the ability to “read” identity either from appearances or through “categories”’ (73). The strategy arose from a desire to *perform* her poetry rather than simply read it out. Aston and Harris cite SuAndi as saying, ‘so that just became my technique in performance and [...] when you realise that that’s what you’re doing, you begin to craft that technique. So that’s my whole idea that you lead into it, so that the journey begins from the moment I begin my set’ (72, omission in original). This is a fundamentally important piece of advice for makers of performance work, and one that all of the practitioners

in the book allude to - that the formulation of relevant techniques emerges from the *doing* of performance.

Aston and Harris also highlight Vayu Naidu's strategy of using a form of context-responsive improvisation. Naidu, a storyteller, is cited as engaging with 'Brechtian notions of *'breaking the fourth wall through story telling'*' (141, emphasis in original) inspired by her observation of the ability of storytellers to incorporate audience responses (such as the flash of a camera) into their performance, apparently seamlessly (141). During her workshop, Naidu explained that 'absolutely core to her art is [...] a "relish for language"' (143) and she highlighted the accessibility of this art form by establishing through demonstration that 'for this genre of practice, all that is really required is a *"storyteller and a listener"*' (143, emphasis in original). Aston and Harris find that, in a similar way to SuAndi, Naidu's performance demonstration revealed that her performance style moulds to the specific context and audience with whom she is engaging but with an 'even greater degree of improvisation' (143). They quote Naidu as saying 'you may have an idea that this is the story you could be performing but once you have come into the lit space, you make eye contact with your audience, and the storyteller has to [...] be completely liberated at that moment, be a composer at the same time' (143, omission in original).

In examples such as these, and throughout Aston and Harris's project, the themes of collaboration and autobiography emerge, providing a blueprint that could be taken as a potentially limiting notion of "best practice" for performance methods, themes and processes. Wisely, however, in their conclusion, Aston and Harris refrain from creating a grand narrative of women's performance practice, although, they do reflect on the potential for networks of community that can emerge through the creation of work in 'radical and political frameworks' (177). As evidence they cite the

workshop experience and the ‘temporary communities’ that sprang up as a result of the project (187). This echoes the experience of the practitioners themselves who, even if solo artists, all use a creative partner to support them in their work. Intriguingly, Aston and Harris themselves have often worked in partnership academically and this may be one source of their interest in the notion of collaborative working. Or it may be that collaborative ways of working are more potentially available to resistant outcomes.

The concluding chapter reveals the individual reflections of Gerry and Elaine, in contrast with the united authorial voice of the preceding chapters. However the notion of a multi-vocality runs through the work. Aston and Harris state that,

undertaking the ‘Women’s Writing for Performance’ project has been a collaborative process from beginning to end: between artists and participants in the workshops, between participants in the different workshop groups, with the project administrator [...] and between ourselves in facilitating and researching the programme [...] ultimately we have not tried to “perform” this work as one voice, but have “created” a textured rather than seamless narrative. (16-17)

They indicate that this interconnectedness between [women] practitioners ‘in the interests of imagining, making and changing’ (183) is a political and potentially radical and transformative act. All of the practitioners that Aston and Harris encounter see the necessarily collaborative nature of their work as being the most fulfilling aspect of making. *Performance Practice and Process* highlights a need for more cross-disciplinary and cross-practitioner collaboration and support, and raises questions about the emphasis that could be placed on collaborative performance making over the notion of the artist as discrete entity in education and in funding paradigms. Ultimately, attention to this aspect of making poses challenges to the Cartesian hierarchical binary and may explain the resistant potential of these practitioners’ performance output.

***American Puppet Modernism: Essays on the Material World in Performance* by John Bell**

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 292 pp. (hardback)

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John Bell's recent publication is a densely written, deeply researched collection of essays that investigates the development of puppet theatre and performing objects in the United States and argues for a reconsideration of material in performance and the performing object. The work draws on a wide range of disciplines and examples. These include theatre history, social and political theory, advertising and mechanization, popular culture, and anthropology. Throughout, Bell pushes against the limits of what puppet theatre and the material world in performance are.

Bell begins with a brief presentation of key concerns in contemporary puppet theatre scholarship and outlines two definitions of a puppet, one from Detroit puppeteer, Paul McPharlin, the other from folklorist and linguistic scholar, Frank Proschan. He then summarizes key concepts such as reception theory, and explores philosophical concerns, giving the reader an understanding of Bell's own theoretical underpinning. This analysis leads to his definition of puppet modernism as 'object performance forms in the company of newer techniques' (8).

Chapter two is an analysis of John Stevens' *Sioux War Panorama*, which toured the American Midwest in the 1860s and 1870s. Bell emphasizes the colonialist agenda behind the show and positions the performance of the panorama (a type of picture performance accompanied by narrative and/or musical accompaniment) within the white settler's expansionist movement. In contrast, chapter three investigates the Zuni Shalako puppet tradition through the ethnographic writings of Matilda Coxe

Stevenson and Frank Cushing. Bell uses their research to highlight the fantasies of an exotic other within the US context, and to engage with a festival tradition that emerges from US soil. Further, he draws a link between the Shalako tradition and a 1960s 'reappraisal of "primitive" culture' (48) that influenced the work of artists such as Peter Schumann and Godfrey Reggio.

The historical core of Bell's analysis and theoretical proposal is detailed in the following five chapters, in which he locates the 'birth of the American puppeteer' (49) and the emergence of US puppet modernism in 'The Little Theater Movement,' political protest, and marketing. 'The Little Theater Movement,' 'a radical effort to create noncommercial, community "art theater,"' developed in the early twentieth century and was inspired by the late nineteenth century art theatre movements in Europe. Bell traces the history and influences from the East Coast to the Mid-West through the work of German American artist Tony Sarg in New York City to the 'first successful little theater' started by Ellen Van Volkenburg in Chicago. This movement, he argues, was both the training ground for future puppet theatre artists, and the moment from which puppetry 'established itself as an American art form' (70). Following 'The Little Theater Movement,' Bell historically locates the use of puppets for political protest both on the streets and in the theatre. Although what is and is not a puppet is often contested even within the world of puppet theatre, Bell begins to blur the limits of definition by including large parade puppets, performing signs used in protests in the 1930s, and popular imagery such as the balloons in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. He concludes this section noting that puppetry, through the Little Theater Movement, had reached 'all areas of high and low culture' (137), and arguing that this was most visible at the 1939 World's Fair, which employed a vast array of puppets, performing objects, and technology in various exhibition halls.

In the book's later chapters, Bell moves to the second half of the twentieth century and into the worlds of media, popular culture, 'Kustom Kulture' (which refers to the art of customizing cars in the US), and the work of Bread and Puppet, concluding with an essay on materials. His chapter on 'Performing Objects, Special Effects' traces the dramatic advances in visual media we have seen in film, television, and computer technology in the last 150 years. 'Automobile Performance and Kustom Kulture' further extends Bell's definition of performing objects, as his analysis of the role of cars in identity formation and expression in the US addresses street and popular culture. In 'Beyond the Cold War,' Bell uses a number of the ideas that he developed in earlier chapters to inform his analysis of the work of Bread and Puppet. He draws on the history of puppetry as it has been used in political protest and in the community to analyse two projects: *Mr. Budhoo's Letter of Resignation from the IMF*, an indoor production, and Peter Schumann's use of street parades for political and social demonstration. Bell concludes the book with an essay on materials, old and new, recycled and not, natural and manufactured, in which he argues that material choices reflect social, political, and/or cultural philosophies of artists.

In *American Puppet Modernism*, Bell presents a wide-ranging history of puppets and performing objects within a US socio-political context, contributing new insight into, and detailed analysis of, their roles in US society and theatre history. He simultaneously investigates and re-thinks the role of material objects on stage and in popular culture. Although the language is occasionally challenging to decipher, these essays are often theoretically provocative. While Bell re-thinks the limits of the material world in performance, I found myself asking: what are the limits of calling or naming something a puppet? And as Bell expands definitions of material in

performance and puppets, what, if any, is the difference between a puppet, performing object, and material in performance?

***Choreographing the Folk: The Dance Stagings of Zora Neale Hurston*
by Anthea Kraut**

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, xiv + 304pp (paperback)

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Choreographing the Folk: The Dance Stagings of Zora Neale Hurston aims to ‘contribute to what Susan Manning has termed the “new intercultural historiography of American dance,” a correction to the long-standing tendency in dance studies to segregate dance traditions according to race and genre [and location]’ (13). Underlying Anthea Kraut’s study of Hurston is her ‘interest in “invisibilized” histories, to borrow Brenda Dixon Gottschild’s term for the systematic omission of the Africanist influences on American performances’ (x). Kraut’s text is in dialogue with previous American dance analyses by Susan Manning, Gottschild, and Mark Franko, and through it she aims to make Hurston’s role and legacy in American dance visible.

Consequently, Kraut and the above-mentioned dance academics make visible the ‘racial hybridity of American dance’ (13), and indirectly parallel President Barack Obama’s inaugural speech in which he referred to America’s ‘patchwork heritage as a strength’ (20 Jan 2009). *Choreographing the Folk* is suitable for those working in dance studies, performance studies, folk studies, race studies, and African-American studies. It might also be of interest to those in other fields, such as anthropology and ethnography, which are concerned with making visible the ‘invisibilized’ histories of not only African, but also Latin-American, Asian and other marginalised groups.

Kraut's introduction, 'Rediscovering Hurston's Embodied Representations of the Folk' outlines her central research question: '[w]hy did performances by Hurston and the Bahamian dancers pique the interest of such an assortment of artists, and why is so little known today about these productions?' (3). To answer this, Kraut focuses on six areas: commercialisation, choreography, production, embodiment, interpretation and re-staging, and the role race plays in dance collaborations. Each of these areas is addressed and explored in one of the work's six chapters, and the monograph concludes with a coda on Hurston's Choreographic Legacy. Kraut's writing style is methodical, and at times, a little laborious, as she works through Hurston's relationship with her wealthy patron Charlotte Osgood Mason and Alain Leroy Locke of the Harlem Renaissance. However, as a result of this writing style, the reader accompanies Kraut on her research quest as she carefully uncovers and makes visible the role Hurston played in black folk dance in the 1930s.

Chapter one, 'Commercialization and the Folk,' explores Hurston's desire to stage authentic 'black' folk culture on the commercial stage. The staging of the Fire Dance and the role Hurston played in its production forms the main focus in the following chapter 'Choreography and the Folk.' In 'Producing the Great Day', Kraut investigates Mason's patronage of Hurston, and how the performance arena offered Hurston an opportunity to enact agency and thereby embody authorship in the producing of the *Great Day* programme. In the performance of the *Great Day*, Hurston drew on the kinaesthetic knowledge of her audience, demonstrated the relationship between labour and cultural production, and used the theatrical arena to put forward her model of black diasporic solidarity (144). Hence, in the subsequent chapter, 'Hurston's Embodied Theory of Folk', Kraut argues that it was in performance, not writing, that Hurston was able to be far 'subtler and more assertive'

(133) in advancing her theory of the folk. In chapter five, ‘ Interpreting the Fire Dance,’ primitivism and its association with ‘blackness’ is investigated, and in chapter six, ‘Black Authenticity, White Artistry,’ Kraut demonstrates how ‘the proliferation of Hurston’s stage version of the Fire Dance coincided with the erasure of her choreographic role in its production’ (211).

Kraut examines how Hurston’s revues ‘force one to confront the ways in which she [Hurston] was simultaneously critical of and complicit’ in the commercialized representations of black culture’ (xi). This results in Kraut highlighting how recent the term choreographer is, as ‘in the 1920s and 1930s, terminology like “arranged,” “staged,” and “directed” was much more commonly used to recognize dance artists working on the theatrical stage’ (53). Kraut maintains that labelling Hurston as choreographer of the Fire Dance does not diminish the contributions made by the Bahamian dancers. Throughout her chapter on ‘Choreography and the Folk,’ Kraut demonstrates how calling Hurston a choreographer, examining the uses and meanings of the term ‘choreographer,’ and arguing that ‘classifying Hurston as such – or at least, as a co-choreographer [...] forces us to attend to her calculated and labor-intensive orchestration of dancing bodies in time and space’ (89).

Although Kraut’s focus is on American dance, this strategy of making visible marginalized dance performances, dancers, and choreographers is also of benefit to the study of global dance forms which have migrated across the world and continue to do so due to globalization and transnationalism.

Kraut reminds the reader that,

the telling I offer is based on the archival traces that only fractionally capture the movements and meanings of a group of bodies who wrestled with how to represent black folk dance in the 1930s. Reading and interpreting the presence

of these bodies despite and through the archive's absences, I hope to demonstrate that what is discernible through the dark glass of history is unquestionably worth knowing. (17)

Kraut successfully achieves this aim, and throughout her meticulous and well-researched monograph, she reveals the archival traces of dancing bodies. She strategically makes these dancing bodies present by populating her text both literally and visually with bodies. In the appendix, there is a 'Chronology of Known Performances of Hurston and the Bahamian Dancers' (223 – 225) and a list of the 'Known Members of the Bahamian Dancers between 1932 and 1936' (227). Bodies are in existence in a variety of visual documentation, such as a photograph from the *Chicago Daily News* (1934) of Hurston's *Singing Steel* cast members with Ballroom dance icon Irene Castle (203), a collection of photographs of Hurston demonstrating the Crow Dance (75), and a reproduced image of The Fire Dance Programme (1939) (54). In the 'Introduction,' Kraut emphasizes that 'written documents do directly relay some corporeal information' (16), and so, too, does her monograph on Zora Neale Hurston and the stagings of the Bahamian Fire Dance.

Kraut's text serves as a call for dance studies to re-consider and question any hierarchy of certain dance forms such as ballet and western contemporary dance over popular dance forms like street, or global dance forms with their roots in African or Southern Asia. Rather, dance studies should stress the variety of movement styles, and, like Hurston, invite audiences 'to discern both the differences and the correlations between [not only] black diasporic vernacular dances' (153) but all forms of movement, thus celebrating the diversity of this art form.