

## **Dramatic Autonomy**

k.katafiasz@newman.ac.uk

To disrupt the utopian *gesamkunstwerk*, where sound and image synthesise into a hyperreal experience (Schröter 2011), Brechtian theatre and postdramatic performance invoke what Lehmann terms the 'aesthetics of undecidability' (2006: 100). Here, an audience is unsure whether a pause is involuntary (the actor has 'dried'), or intentional (staged); whether we are dealing with reality or fiction.

This paper will contend that contesting signs from inside Lehmann's 'fictive and simulated text cosmos' with signs from outside it, is tantamount to asking a blind person to open their eyes wider. I will propose the more radical aesthetic of Edward Bond, whose work for young people frequently destabilises the sign itself; a manoeuvre which does not necessitate postdramatic narrative rupture. For instance in *Tune* (2011), fourteen year old Robert is accused of vandalism; in response he transforms into a 'boy-wall'. The paper will analyse the strangeness of this swathed figure, a signifier which precedes and indexes its human object, rendering the delimitation between *proskene* and *obskene* mutable without breaching it. Bond's wall-figure may remind us of various philosophical and dramatic moves to articulate a democratic relation between coded and uncoded positionalities; of Kantian autonomy, Heideggerian *Perdurance*, Lacanian *Souffrance*; of ancient *Ekphratic* messenger speeches.

### **Works Cited**

Bond, Edward, (2011), 'Tune' in *Plays: 9*, London: Methuen.

Lehmann, Hans-Thies, (2006), *Postdramatic Theatre*, London: Routledge.

Schröter, Jens, (2011), 'Discourses and Models of Intermediality', in *Comparative Literature and Culture*, Volume 13 Issue 3, <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol13/iss3/3>

### **Author Biography**

Dr. Kate Katafiasz is Senior Lecturer in Drama at Newman University in Birmingham, UK. She completed her PhD at the University of Reading in December 2011. Research interests include embodiment, aesthetics and intermediality in applied drama and theatre. She has presented conference workshops and papers at CDE (Bochum) and ESSE (Istanbul-Boğaziçi) in 2012; at ASTR (Dallas) and TaPRA (Glasgow) in 2013; and at TPP (Paris-Sorbonne) in June 2014. Recent peer-reviewed publications include:

'Quarrelling with Brecht: understanding Bond's post-structuralist political aesthetic', pp. 237-251 in *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, Volume 28: 3 (2008), Bristol: Intellect.

'Staging Reality (beyond representation): a perplexing Bondian body', in *JCDE, Journal for the Study of Contemporary Drama in English*: Volume 1, (2013), Berlin: de Gruyter.

'Dramatic Leadership: Dorothy Heathcote's *Autopoietic*, or Embodied Leadership Model', in *The Embodiment of Leadership*, a volume in the International Leadership Association's 'Building Leadership Bridges' series, (2013), San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Wiley.

'Failed embodiment, silent speech, and ontological intermediality in Edward Bond's production of *The Under Room*', in *Body, Space & Technology* Vol. 11 No 2 (2013), [online] Available at <http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/vol1102>

'Dramatic *Jouissance*', in *E-rea* (Revue électronique d'études sur le monde anglophone), special volume entitled 'Reading English-language Arts and Literature with the Later Lacan', to appear in the autumn of 2014. Currently under peer-review.

'Castrated Ladies', a chapter in *Edward Bond's Women*, edited by Susana Roman, forthcoming 2015, Gylphy Press.