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### Petra Kuppers: *Eco Soma*

Petra Kuppers's *Eco-Soma: Pain and Joy in Speculative Performance Encounters* calls for coming to terms with the creative potential of "bodymindspirits" in motion, with a collective, more-than-human, assemblage of care, pain, and joy. In the book, eco-soma arises as a methodology, but also as a way of making sense of somatic politics in performance beyond individualistic, neoliberal, and colonial subject definitions. Mobilising a wide range of creative practices, Kuppers brings the reader into a fantastic and transformative journey that urges them "not to overidentify but to wonder" (1).

Eco-soma is far from a perfect formula; on the contrary, Kuppers argues for a flexible, affective engagement with theory, bringing disability culture(s), Indigenous and queer studies, decolonial praxis and environmental studies together. This emphasis on experimentation and care is one of the strongest elements of the book: by challenging reductive and universalising assumptions about the dancing body, conceiving performative practice as a site of knowledge and multispecies care, and carefully questioning the ways in which critical inquiry can be compromised and conditioned by hegemonic power-knowledge relationships, *Eco-Soma* always positions the reader in uncertain territory without making them feel threatened. In fact, Kuppers' book queers the politics of public performance and dance, making the reader a participant - not just an observer - of the action. This is done, for example, by inserting a YouTube link and asking the reader to pause, watch the video and become aware of their own positionality; by avoiding certain interpretations in cases where the author believes that she might be misinterpreting the practitioners; by relinquishing individual authorship and including fellow participants as part of a choreographed, mosaic-like engagement with a performance (in Chapter 3); or by diversifying the art projects examined and giving the same attention to world-famous practitioners and works displayed in the Venice Biennale as to community-based theatre.

*Eco-Soma* is immersive and challenges categorisation and compartmentalisation. The book is organised around four chapters that analyse several performative projects from the standpoint of queer and crip presences and move organically from practice to theory, from speculative thought to affective entanglements. Chapter 1 focuses on social somatics and introduces the first "otherworldly-and-yet-real" vibrant presence: tentacles. The starting point for this critical and care-based reflection on tentacular relationships is the idea that "the horizon is a meeting place where lived and felt bodies and lived and felt (more-than-human) social lifeworlds touch" (14). Bringing together choreographed, shared efforts, monsters, colonial violence and somatic practice, the chapter explores "futures thinking of self-care and communal as well as personal happiness" (22). The idea of agency, understood as an unconstrained, universal prerogative, is called into question here, as it is the principle of identification and that can lead to reducing "the other's otherness" in order to assimilate and profit from it. The first part of this chapter brings the reader to Melbourne to reflect on love, care, and observation at the hands of the Rollercoaster Theatre. An exercise in flocking in Oakland follows, as much an exercise in orientation as a call for queer and interspecies intimacies: for "to be in the flock means to enter a group meditative state" (41). Throughout the book, Kuppers incorporates projects in which she participates and/or which she coordinates, including The Olimpias, a performance research collective. Two projects by The Olimpias are examined then, taking the reader to Berlin, to explore the relationship between history, memory, and futurity, and Utrecht, to engage with colonialism, extractive practices, the history of medicine, spices, and tentacles. The chapter concludes by visiting an art installation and collective garden at the Berlin Biennial.

The relationship between land and water is the focus of Chapter 2. The task here is to "engag[e] postapocalyptic thinking by acknowledging Indigenous apocalypses, undermining my own stability, listening

to beyond what I know, pulling the rug out from under myself, asking more questions about this ground, and opening my sensorium to more languages and voices" (70). There is in this chapter a call for crowded writing that brings Deleuze and Guattari in touch with Indigenous epistemologies and ways of being in the world; a reflection on body politics during Covid times; an invitation to "revering"; the sound of heartbeats and drums; an artistic fountain; sharks, mermaids, and all sorts of hybrid beings. Having video in common, the creative and care-based initiatives analysed here are about "try[ing] to live artfully in the post-apocalypse" and "keep[ing] difference in play" (100).

Water, writing and talking come together in Chapter 3, one of the most ambitious and stylistically experimental chapters. The first step in the reader's journey brings them to a park in Detroit, where artist and thinker breezant is developing *Visions of the Evolution* and making participants question their own familiarity and proximity to water, glass and green spaces. A play in Chicago (Lucy Kirkwood's *The Children*) is discussed afterwards from the viewpoint of haunting presences, animals and climate catastrophe. Sins Invalid's *Dirty River Girl* is then introduced as an example of "a somatic that extends beyond one's self envelope (or skin sack), one that demands a form of personhood and well-being for land and human (and nonhuman) others" (120). The Salamander project, an initiative led by Kupperts in different parts of the world that brings disabled bodies together for a speculative swimming session, closes the chapter.

If *Eco-Soma* began by exposing the reader to tentacles and mermaids, in its final chapter rays, "space travel, escape trajectories, and plant humans" (154) are interlaced with embodied thought. Turtle Disco, a project coordinated by Kupperts in her home in Michigan, starts a journey that continues with Cthulhian presences in a puppet show by Dreamland Theatre. The action then moves to Oregon with the Wobbly Dance Company, which, in *Waking the Green Sound: A Dancefilm for the Trees*, uses video to speculate and interact with plant-human critters. Sueyeun Juliette Lee's *Solar Maximum* is examined next as a poetic project that establishes a relationship between creativity, solar rays and stellar time. The idea that rays connect us to other entities is central to the concluding remarks, which reexamine Antoine Hunter's *Make Me Wanna Holler* performance and the politics of death and breath in Black Lives Matter. Overall, *Eco-Soma* is a fascinating and surprising journey into the unexpected that lies by the side of us, not so much a critical discussion of specific art projects as a future-oriented act of imagination that brings body politics, ecology and crip futures together as part of a single exercise of love and endurance.

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