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***Das Drama des Prekären: Über die Wiederkehr der Ethik in Theater und Performance* (The Drama of the Precarious: On the Return of Ethics in Theatre and Performance). By Katharina Pewny. Bielefeld: transcript, 2011. Pp. 336. €32.80 Pb.**

Sruti Bala

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women artists face. Her epistolary relationship with lifelong friend filmmaker Stan Brakhage is particularly illuminated by her outrage at his frequent sexist transgressions. During this same period, Schneemann moves from painting to performance art, as she describes the conception and realization of kinetic theatre pieces like the foundational *Meat Joy* (1964). Detailing others' experimental performances provides context for the 1960s art scene, as with a letter describing the police action that shut down Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman's 1967 performance of *Opera Sextronique*.

The second section (1969–75) begins after her break-up with Tenney, detailing a period of wandering in London, while in the third section (1976–86) Schneemann chronicles creating *The Men Cooperate* (1976); *ABC – We Print Anything – In the Cards* (1976), and the book *More than Meat Joy* (1979), among others. Mostly ignored by the art world, she was not ignored by younger artists: an El Paso filmmaker sends word of the censorship of her film *Fuses*; artist Barbara Smith asks Schneemann for advice on how to finish her book; other artists write to thank her for her visionary work. Schneemann sends thoughtful replies to all. In her striking response to Dick Higgins's suggestion that she find a young surrogate for her own performance pieces, Schneemann contemplates midlife, asking, 'why should sexual age be so narrow? . . . I only have one chance to be middle-aged, right? So why not see what that tells?' (p. 327).

In the fourth section (1987–99), Schneemann corrects critics' articulations of her legacy, calling them out for trivializing her role in the Happenings movement, and for characterizing her as someone who 'hung out with the [Fluxus] boys'. Notably, she chides Amelia Jones for her characterization of the elegantly ravelled material Schneemann pulled from her own vagina in *Interior Scroll* as 'wads of paper' (pp. 418–21). *Correspondence Course* is a valuable archive of the thought behind Schneemann's *oeuvre*, and a reminder of her importance to subsequent generations of body artists. The extensive photo-documentation of her work in *More than Meat Joy*, including a concise performance chronology, is a useful companion to this collection of letters.

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Das Drama des Prekären: Über die Wiederkehr der Ethik in Theater und

Performance (The Drama of the Precarious: On the Return of Ethics in Theatre and Performance). By **Katharina Pewny**. Bielefeld: transcript, 2011. Pp. 336. €32.80 Pb.

Reviewed by Sruti Bala, University of Amsterdam, s.bala@uva.nl

Katharina Pewny's postdoctoral study is an ambitious project. It seeks to investigate the concept of precarity and reformulate it from a philosophical and socio-economic paradigm into an aesthetic and art-historical one. The premise of the study is that contemporary, primarily European, performance practices stand out in terms of their insistence on and search for an ethics of responding to injury, vulnerability, crisis and instability. This ethical turn is not merely evident in the themes and topics of the performances, but moreover marked by aesthetic strategies of evoking the condition of

precarity. The study is interested in how the precarious becomes visible and palpable onstage.

Beginning with a thorough and careful etymological engagement with the concept, and proceeding to an elaborate reading of Emmanuel Levinas's theorization of responsibility towards the other, Pewny traces the legacy of the concept of the precarious as an adjective rather than a noun, most fruitfully understood in terms of the traces it leaves and generates. The study provides well-researched analyses of a range of recent productions, some of which are widely acclaimed in the German theatre world, but lesser known elsewhere, such as Einar Schleef's staging of Elfriede Jelinek's *Ein Sportstück* (Sport Play), René Pollesch's *Heidi-Hoh Trilogy*, Christoph Marthaler's *Schutz vor der Zukunft* (Protection against the Future), the work of the performance collective She She Pop, the performer-curator Jochen Roller, a German Polish artist collective working under the fictitious name of Veronika Blumstein, the filmic work of Fatih Akin and the multimedial dance performances of Emre Koyuncuoglu, to name only a few. The methodology employed, which Pewny calls 'overwriting', borrowed from dance researcher Randy Martin's work, consists of a theoretically guided investigation of traces of signs of the precarious in the performances. To give one example: the idea of the precarious as the revocable (*widerruflich*) is expanded theoretically in relation to Althusser's notion of interpellation, the call or hail that summons subjects into being, and this is applied to a reading of performances wherein the telephone call is prominently present, such as the increasing number of performances related to call centres and the information economy. The sign of the phone call onstage is thus interpreted in terms of bearing traces of the precarious in the aesthetics, highlighting the acoustic in calling upon and invoking the ethical 'response-ability' in the audience. A further element of overwriting is the intertextual and contextual references that Pewny sensitively traces, drawing links between the precarious conditions of the economy, of national identity formation, and of gender constitution.

The study argues that contemporary theatre in fact performs and stages the precarious in three interconnected ways: the first is through the strategy of indirect representation and through a strong visual vocabulary that evades straightforward meaning-making; second, the precarious is present in terms of its transformative potential, where the theatre follows no simple mimetic procedure, but turns to the involvement of the viewer to make space for the precarious other; third, the precarious is understood in terms of the relational dimension of contemporary performance, wherein an arena of exchange is generated in the space of the theatre.

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Re-visioning Myth: Modern and Contemporary Drama by Women. By Frances Babbage. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011. Pp. x + 261. £60 Hb.

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Frances Babbage begins her study by accounting for Holly Hunter's less-than-successful appearance on the London stage in Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats* (2004). This