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## BEYOND TEXT: THEATER AND PERFORMANCE IN PRINT AFTER 1900. Jennifer Buckley. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019; Pp. 278.

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*Beyond Text: Theater and Performance in Print After 1900* challenges the historiography of print media as we have known it and brings together text and performance practices as symbiotic, rather than mutually exclusive. Taking on the rich and contradictory history of “killing off the Book,” *Beyond Text* calls out anti-textual artists and their use of print media—not to emphasize hypocrisy, but rather to illuminate text’s enduring life in and around the performance art worlds.

Jennifer Buckley highlights that the evolution of text has largely been recorded within essentialist narratives that have made trouble by assuming text to be the opposite of performance because it “precedes, in time, the process of theatrical production; because writers accord it artistic precedence over production; and because its traditional medium is durable and static while performance is ephemeral and mutable” (10). The physical book of *Beyond Text* is hard-covered, with the image of Carolee Schneemann on the front, perusing a book with her cat, Kitch, on her lap. The binding of this tome creaks at its initial openings, almost as if it has the first line in our interactions. The nine-inch by six-inch pages, with their copious open margins, allow the reader easier access and a bountiful opportunity for note-taking—indeed, it seems to be encouraged.

Rather than simply negating what has been documented about print media’s history and its relationship with performance, Buckley’s deep analysis of each performance artist or group she covers allows us as readers to make the journey beyond text *with* her by taking up how theatre makers have interacted with and made bookworks or engaged with text-based formats. Her arguments include that the avant-garde anti-textualist movement that is often brought forward in discussions of late twentieth century performance is not just limited but is actively limiting what we can know about our own histories because it has not “encompass[ed] the book arts, which are experiencing yet another boom in yet another era when print is supposed to be dying” (24).

The book is divided into five chapters with an introduction and a coda. In her introduction, Buckley uses Big Dance Theater’s bookwork *Another Telepathic Thing* as an entry point for how we have understood the relationship (or, perhaps more accurately, disdain) between performance art mediums and print matter (she bristles at the exclusionist term ‘the book’). In so doing, she simultaneously calls out those of us who have historically ignored print practices and their role in performance and reveals that in fact, bookworks are experiencing yet another explosion in the here and now (one of many since 1900).

Each chapter addresses, in chronological order, the evolution of performance-makers’ relationship with text and print. In chapter 1, “A Place for Seeing,” *Beyond Text* takes up Edward Gordon Craig’s vision of what the theatre could be and the bookworks he created. Buckley establishes the trajectory of text as non-linear with Craig’s banishment of playwrights and his contradictory use of much older media, such as wood engraving. She examines Craig’s written intentions to “exhibit” and “show” actors what he wanted in performance, rather than resort to speech since he saw words as having only “technical” status—though perhaps useful for notation.

Chapter 2, “Scoring Theatre,” takes the notation idea from Craig and connects it to Lothar Schreyer’s ideas around how to score theatre in a way that others could reasonably emulate. Schreyer’s system, *Spielgang*, was an attempt to do this and Buckley dissects the technique, revealing how it was used in specific performances and how it affected art writ large in its elevation of the notation-system’s use to a spiritual endeavor intended to help create reproducible community works (*Gemeinschaftswerk*).

Chapter 3 shifts forward in time yet again, but in this instance, Buckley pulls the thread of community works forward to look at a theatre collective in lieu of individuals. The Living Theatre and their publication negotiations are detailed in this chapter, highlighting how ironically Julian Beck and Judith Malina used the printed works they published commercially to establish their agenda of anti-textualist and anarchist performance principals.

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Chapter 4 returns to an individual, Carolee Schneemann, and is titled “The Body in the Book” for her ability to “see and articulate the conceptual and material intersections between her visual artworks, performances, and publications” (126). From Schneemann’s *Interior Scroll* to her work with the Beau Geste Press, Buckley traverses the evolution of print media through the microcosm of a single performer/art-maker to demonstrate a collaborative kinetic aesthetics that invites participation from the reader/viewer.

Chapter 5 also investigates the use of participation of spectators in the immersive work of Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s *Códices*. Buckley considers how his codices serve as border sites and kits for participants to encounter the “other” in “participatory identity rituals” as “good bordercrossers” and as “models for the usefully creative appropriation of others’art” (195).

In her Coda, Buckley firmly asserts (which, by this point, she no longer has to) that print matter will have a future relationship with performance, the shape of which she does not wish to speculate about. It is telling that a full 15% of the book—the remainder after the Coda and before the bibliography—is notes. For those with the intention, time, and appetite to delve into this printed work further, Buckley provides fodder from her extensive archival research.

*Beyond Text* teaches that text work and live performance are “no longer locked in a Darwinian struggle for precedence, [but] coexist under the rubric of the performatic...” (197) This monograph provides a valuable contribution to the fields of Performance Studies, Print Media and disciplines that straddle the two. As I closed this book, my thoughts drifted back to one of Craig’s performance descriptions: “And then a pause... a perfect balanced thought is poised before us, and all is still... All is accomplished. Silence. All rests...” (36) Revelatory and well-researched, *Beyond Text* ends with so much potential energy vibrating within and beyond its covers and performance histories—waiting to be experienced again and again.

## References

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## About The Authors

Dr. Lynn Deboeck is an Associate Professor of Theatre and Gender Studies at the University of Utah. She earned her PhD in Theatre and a Graduate Certificate in Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies from the University of Kansas. Her research interests include reproductive women on stage, gender and representation in performance, pedagogy in higher education and feminist theatre.

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