

Mansfield's "How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped" is a story about a little girl named Pearl Button who is kidnapped by two strange women . . . Possibly, this is a dream the Pearl is having, because she is watching the clouds that are playing hide-and-seek, and perhaps Pearl drifts into the clouds and these women are the ones who find her. (116)

It is difficult to imagine the reader who would benefit from this uninformative summary of the story.

In conclusion, Morrow's study might prove useful as an introduction to Mansfield, or as a reference for the undergraduate student. However, Mansfield specialists will likely find it too limited in its scope to affect current scholarship, and postcolonial readers in particular may find its treatment of the New Zealand context superficial and ultimately unilluminating.

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Richard Schechner. *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance*. New York: Routledge, 1993. pp. x, 283. \$27.50.

Richard Schechner is well known for his performance and ritual theories of theatre; his latest book offers a sample of his traditional work on ritual and a new approach that is refreshingly cautious, since he has, it seems, begun to appreciate the limitations of intercultural performance and research.

*The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* begins with vintage Schechner describing ritual and play in intercultural terms that overlook any sort of cultural specificity. The middle sections are based on papers that have appeared elsewhere, while the concluding chapters begin to question productively the spectre that Schechner helped create: intercultural performance. The fragmentary tone of the book—and the inconsistencies that this creates—is acknowledged partly by the too convenient statement in the acknowledgements that "[m]y writing isn't finished" (viii). The conversational style that Schechner employs (with himself always centre stage) is also a part of this convenience, which can also be interpreted as laxness (for instance, the repetitive use of the imprecise word "bigness"). The first sentence provides an example of the generalizations in a style that communicates little beyond self-indulgence:

The best way to . . . understand, enliven, investigate, get in touch with, outwit, contend with, defend oneself against, love . . . others, other cultures, the elusive and intimate "I thou," the other in oneself, the other opposed to oneself, the feared, the hated, envied, different other . . . is to perform and to study performances and performative behaviours in all their various genres, contexts, expressions, and historical processes. (1, Schechner's ellipses)

The text would be well served by good editing to separate the author a bit more from his work.

The early sections of the text present ritual, theatre, protest, and carnival in a context that merges them all. Instead of attending to distinctions, Schechner focuses only on the similarities between them, however tenuous the similarities may be at times. Such comparisons inevitably collapse many cultures into one, as in the case of his work on India. He frequently uses these similarities to segue into radically different activities, arguments, and signifying systems. As well, there are frequently eclectic comparisons that seem to exist for effect rather than for advancing an argument. The most striking example is the comparison of the performative energy in the Ramlila to the creation of black holes: "Asserting that existence is a continuous dance is not a soft-headed metaphor for the Indians; nor is it inconsistent with contemporary theories of particle physics or cosmology as astronomers playfully construct them" (31). The more dangerous elisions involve nations and cultures. According to Schechner, the world is not broken up into nations or regions; to him, we are all part of a "planetary culture" (16) that promotes the abandonment of nations and national boundaries. Gesturing towards unspecified "crumbling national myths" (17) provides Schechner with enough justification for interculturalism and a lack of concern for the "other" culture and the way in which it might be consumed.

Certain other boundaries are also breached in *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance*. "Performance is amoral" (1), Schechner writes, which, presumably, is the justification for his "conversion" from Judaism to Hinduism in order to observe the temple rituals at the Ramakrishna ashram, near Trichur in India. This enables him to write in his diary, "[t]hus I go into this with my fingers crossed, winking at my Jewish self" (4). This self-recognized "hypocritical conversion" (5) perpetuates the false pretences for which writers such as Rustom Bharucha have criticized Schechner and interculturalism. Schechner's opportunism is again revealed in his discussion of the Waehma, the Easter cycle of religious drama of the Yaqui people of Arizona. The Yaqui people forbid pictures of the ritual (although Schechner publishes some that, he reasons, have already been published elsewhere) and observers are themselves forbidden from attending certain activities, but Schechner writes that he woke one night and "investigated" the noises he heard to find a ceremony in progress. He refuses to see such voyeurism as an invasion.

The Waehma chapter and several of the other chapters are very interesting reading as anthropological accounts, but their connection to theatre seems very tenuous: it is as if the ritual is supposed to speak for itself as an immanently theatrical pleasure drained of its other significances. The chapter on street theatre posits that demonstrations, protests, carnival, and theatre—all of which can and do take place on streets—are theatre. In the circular argument, Schechner suggests that when ritual is "restaged as carnival" then "the efficacious function

of ritual is reassigned to entertainment" (85). It seems that, according to Schechner, everything that is political and has carnival overtones can become ritual and can become theatre, including the Tiananmen Square demonstrations! The blurring of distinctions in the interests of defining both theatre and ritual more widely undermines the efficacy of each of the activities. While he criticizes the cliché "all the world's a stage" as a "weak metaphor trivializing both art and daily living," in fact he is showing that "living" is theatre and that all theatre is just "play" that is involved in the life of every culture. This in itself risks trivializing far more dangerously the diverse cultures he considers.

*The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* pays attention almost exclusively to Western critics. One notable exception is Homi Bhabha, who is referenced several times in the chapter on Wayang Kulit, Indonesian puppetry. Perhaps critics such as Bhabha have alerted Schechner to the problems with the appropriation that he has been espousing through principles of performance theory. This chapter is much more concerned with the political differences between performing Wayang Kulit in the U.S. and performances of it in Java.

The final chapter, a welcome change in ethos, considers other practitioners' use of ritual, particularly in the U.S. Schechner comments, "[r]itual has been so variously defined . . . that it means very little because it means too much" (228). He decides that people such as Felicitas Goodman and her Cuyamungue Institute are misguided: "To seek experience without knowledge is to commodify the process" (252). Goodman, Jerzy Grotowski, and others are actually striving "to control and use what they know is very powerful stuff" (254). He even criticizes a long-time colleague in ritual-theatre studies, the late Victor Turner, concluding:

These anthologies of cultures, or the wish for globalism, strike me as premature, because they are unavoidably expressions of Western hegemony, attempts to cull and harvest the world's cultures. Maybe later in history, if there is more equality of power, more actual multiculturalism, but not now. (257)

While his final statements are presented in a confusing dream metaphor, the subtext questions his work of the last decade. The future of ritual as a separate, boundary-less, unpoliticized theatrical activity, thankfully, may be dim.

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#### WORK CITED

Bharucha, Rustom. *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.