

Cambridge, MA: 1989). This would however require more editorial intervention than has been attempted here. Hallensleben's introduction does not engage at length with the actual arguments laid out by his contributors, nor are any later editorial introductions or framed boxed text provided for the chapters. Each of the authors has written his or her work in isolation, and they do not apply the same, or even necessarily similar, theoretical approaches. The most one can say is that Giorgio Agamben's concept of 'bare life' recurs in several essays, such as Karwowska's.

Whilst an open-ended, catholic approach to scholarship is to be admired, the pit-falls of publishing on interdisciplinary topics in this manner are illustrated by this volume. It is not evident why a reader interested in the gender politics of late nineteenth century fashion would also care to know about classical Japanese dance. That I happen to be curious about both proves that such individuals are out there, but one cannot help feeling that book sellers will struggle to find the right market for this text. The assortment of topics is exciting, and suggests new possibilities for research, scholarship and teaching. Ultimately though a small volume of short entries can only sketch such possibilities. It cannot realise them. A text like this must function as a supplement to other scholarship, and it is somewhat unfortunate that the editor and his contributors have not been able to provide a clearer road-map for readers regarding how to navigate such an interlinked departure from the text itself. *Performative Body Spaces* is worth purchasing for Rumold's contribution alone, but like many recent collections of this kind, it comes across as something of a curate's egg, struggling unevenly if heroically to encompass a diversity of offerings within its shell.

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Jones Irwin, *Derrida and the Writing of the Body*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2010, ISBN 978-0-75467-865-6, 197pp, £55.00.

The latest *Derrida Today* conference revealed a growing trend in Derridean studies of looking back towards Derrida's early works in order to understand the later writings. Jones Irwin's selection of writings by Jacques Derrida reflects this, with his particular focus on

what he identifies as the 'avant-garde' influences on Derrida's ideas in his early works such as *Writing and Difference* (1967).

Taking care to identify the avant-garde theorists as a means of distinguishing them from the mainstream philosophical influences on Derrida's work, Irwin proceeds to reflect on the relationship between Derrida and writers such as Antonin Artaud, Georges Bataille, Stéphane Mallarmé and Friedrich Nietzsche. Crucial to his work here is an observation that the role of writers and theorists such as these have been previously ignored or overlooked in Derridean studies. There is a slight danger in this differentiation though, as Irwin makes several references to the avant-garde as representing a 'paradigm shift' in Derrida's work. There are several ways in which this is problematic. Firstly the division of Derrida's work into early phenomenological writings and later writings on the avant-garde, which is to put a break between the small body of works written before *L'écriture et la différence* and those that followed. To call it a 'paradigm shift' is also, in my mind, to imply that there was a bigger break in the style and aim of his writings, when I feel it is more a re-application of the theories he applied to philosophy and phenomenology, to other authors and theorists.

This does nothing to detract from the strength of the book, as Irwin's concise and illuminating introduction contains not only a justification for his project but also for his methodology and choice of texts. It is from this more stable position that he launches into the first chapter, 'Derrida, Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty* and the "Writing of the Body"'. Moving through theorists and topics such as Bataille, Plato, Mallarmé and Feminism, Irwin provides a chronological thread through which to examine Derrida's writings on performance, bodies and the avant-garde.

Of particular interest to me was Irwin's treatment of Derrida's work on Artaud, covered in Irwin's first chapter. Irwin's look at the performative aspects of this essay in relation to the ideas of embodiment at the heart of Artaud's work opens up the notion of performance at work throughout Derrida's writings. The original performance that Artaud strives for and the impossibility of avoiding the re-presentation at the heart of all texts, the necessity of iterability, becomes a strong foundation for Derrida's notion of the 'sur-vival' or texts. Irwin's examination of this early essay opens up the notion of performativity and embodiment throughout all of the later works on writing and reading; highlighting the need to explore more of Derrida's works through the eyes of performance and embodiment.

Irwin combines a well considered mix of academic inquiry and language in order to be intellectually stimulating and thought provoking, with a helpful amount of background knowledge to help foreground the key issues of the debate, making the book suitable for undergraduates through to more senior Derridean or performance and gender studies theorists. By providing this well researched introduction, Irwin offers new starting points from which to re-enter and re-engage with some of Derrida's major, and less major, works.

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Eve Shapiro, *Gender Circuits: Bodies and Identities in a Technological Age*, Routledge, New York and Oxon, 2010, ISBN 978-0-415-99696-9, 248pp, £16.99/US \$31.95.

Our gendered selves, according to Eve Shapiro in her new book, *Gender Circuits: Bodies and Identities in a Technological Age*, are informed by and intrinsically linked to scripts, or norms and expectations, that are established by and enacted within society. The same goes for many identity markers: race, colour, sex, class, and so on. In this text, Shapiro contends that 'new technologies work interactively with other social forces to change the social scripts individuals have for gendered identity' (2010, 130). That is to say, through technology and the products of scientific and social change, we are working to overcome the 'pathology of Western gender' (Shapiro, 2010, 67) and becoming aware of the challenges faced by gender minorities.

Gender Circuits covers a number of issues, opening with an examination of the treatment of gender matters throughout history. Gendered behavioural norms have been inscribed upon individuals and societies for millennia, with technologies of self determining the way that we 'do gender' in social situations. From early on in the text, Shapiro reinforces the notion that, although technologies have long established social scripts, they too have been used again and again to rewrite them. The other chapters interrogate the impact that information technology has had upon gendered identities, with consideration given to social interaction and gendered play in