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PROFILE

Thesis title

Critical passivity: a reparative feminist approach to watching dance

Supervisors

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Abstract

My thesis choreographs critical passivity as a theory for reparative feminist criticism. I argue that critical passivity reorients discursive critical practices towards affective, bodily knowledges. I theorize critical passivity through an attention to how these often-feminized ways of knowing emerge within and through theorizing about watching dance. When articulated through my theory of critical passivity, my close readings reveal how one is moved by affective, material encounters with dance. I offer critical passivity therefore as both a theory and as a critical attitude for feminist criticism. Critical passivity imagines then a feminist approach to dance criticism that is reparative, affective, and moving. I ultimately contend that critical passivity reorients one towards displaced and feminized forms of knowledge through this softer, more open approach. This in turn imagines hopeful futures for feminist thinking that resist how white, patriarchal institutions historize, weaponize, or exorcise feminist thoughts and actions.

My research methods primarily draw upon reparative approaches to feminist critical practices, such as writing practices like *écriture féminine* (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 2003; Quinn, 2015; Trayhurn, 2017). To attend to the material, affective dimensions of writing, I blend these practices with expanded concepts of choreography (Gotman, 2018; Brandstetter, 2011; Forsythe, 2011; Spangberg, 2017). These modes resist patriarchal, logocentric thinking to center feminized knowledges that are often otherwise obscured or marginalized in critical reading and writing methods. Drawing upon Eve Sedgwick's concept of reparative reading, I similarly consider how critical passivity resists paranoid readings in favor of more localized, reparative readings (Sedgwick, 2003). To conceptualize passivity as reparative and hopeful, I draw upon femininity studies and femme theory (Dahl, 2017; Lugones, 2010; Hoskins, 2019; Ahmed, 2017). This feminist and queer scholarship offers in turn an alternative critical lineage for theorizing femininity. Through my reading of femme theory, I argue that passivity offers an empathetic critical ethos that promotes critical strategies for softness, surrender, surprise, and openness.

I utilize close reading in this thesis as a reflexive, iterative praxis predicated on openness and care rather than foreclosure and domination. I conceptualize spectating dance as "reading" dance to collapse distinctions between performance and text (Gotman, 2017; Brandstetter, 2013; Watts, 2010). I draw upon deconstruction and postcritical approaches to remain ambivalent towards extant feminist critical practices (Khanna, 2020; Love, 2017; Sedgwick, 2003). I similarly maintain this ambivalence through my attention to choreographic theories to emphasize how dance criticism must engage with the affective dimensions of dance (Lepecki, 2007; Albright, 1997; Louppe, 1994). Through this position, I suggest that critical passivity's ambivalent disposition situates reparative modes within and alongside paranoid readings to imagine hopeful futures for feminist criticism.

Publications

2019. Critique and Postcritique edited by Elizabeth S. Anker and Rita Felski (book review). *Platform: Journal of Theatre and Performing Arts*. 13(1). 150-153.

Teaching

Visiting Lecturer, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

Tutor (MA Performance), Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts

Conference papers

2024. "Enjoy Extinction, Batman!": Poison Ivy, queer femme ecoterrorists, and solarpunk futures . Intersections

2023. "Can we be a band again?": queer feminist kinship along the edgelands of the institution. Co-authored with Rachel Vogler and Nic Farr. TaPRA

2023. *We won't do this alone: a collective love letter to kinship*. Co-authored with Rachel Vogler and Nic Farr. TaPRA PGR Symposium

2020. *Critically feminine: figuring a femme politics*. Intersections