

Some Food for Thought Regarding the "Function" of Violence in the Theatre

For David Graver, for example, "[s]ignification disguises suffering, making it at best, a sign of itself, if not a sign of something far removed from the anguish of the victim. Theatrical situations can be constructed in such a way that mass immolations can signify little more than God's justice or the technical proficiency of our weapons. Under the pressure of a master narrative pain easily becomes a sentimental footnote and aggression the graceful gestures of power" (46).

Graver, David. "Violent Theatricality: Displayed Enactments of Aggression and Pain." *Theatre Journal* 47.1 (March 1995): 43-64.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes acknowledges that "the one thing humans seem unable to accept is the idea that the world may be deficient in meaning" (23), and suggests that the application of "meaning" to violence allows observers to "extinguish rage and grief for those whose lives are taken and allow[s] for the recruitment of new lives and new bodies into the struggle" (19).

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. "Sacred Wounds: Making Sense of Violence." *Theatre Symposium: A Journal of the Southeastern Theatre Conference* 7 (1999): 7-30.

In a theatrical context, this tendency for bodily pain to escape the rational processes of understanding inaugurates what Stanton B. Garner Jr. calls the "trauma of representation," where "the suffering body subjects the plane of theatrical representation to similar (if often momentary) rupture," thereby "swamp[ing] the representational structures erected to contain it" (162).

Garner Jr., Stanton B. "Post-Brechtian Anatomies: Weiss, Bond and the Politics of Embodiment." *Theatre Journal* 42. 2 (May 1990): 145-64.

For J.D. Martinez discussions about whether violent acts are 'right' or 'wrong', "which depend on processes such as reason, judgment, or intellectual assessment are irrelevant because the arousal effects caused by viewing dramatized violence do not depend on such cognitive processes" (79).

Martinez, J. D. "The Fallacy of Contextual Analysis as a Means of Evaluating Dramatized Violence." *Theatre and Violence*. Special Issue. *Theatre Symposium* 7 (1999): 76-85.

Pascale Aebischer codes the emergence of the wounded body into the visual field as "obscene," that is, "literally 'off, or to one side of the stage', in that [Lavinia's] mangled, leaking, open body forces us to view 'that which is beyond representation'" (29-30)

Aebischer, Pascale. *Shakespeare's Violated Bodies: Stage and Screen Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2004.

In his 1955 review of Brook's production Harold Hobson makes a salient and illustrative point: "In this play murder and cruelty are not wrong in themselves; nor are they right. It depends entirely on who commits them" (*The Sunday Times*).

Hobson, Harold. "A Modern Play." Rev. of *Titus Andronicus*. Dir. Peter Brook. *The Sunday Times*, London Sept. 21, 1955. Shakespeare Centre Library archives.

In this sense, then, the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, 'inside' the subject as its own founding repudiation. (3)

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993.