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Marie Trotter (iD)

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Marie Trotter
McGill University

The COVID-19 pandemic indefinitely postponed the making of traditional theatre in many places around the world; simultaneously, however, this slow-down allowed for the acceleration of the already-emergent world of digital or virtual theatre. As dramatic artists transitioned to making theatre online, audiences, scholars, and critics identified — and on occasion even rejected — such cutting-edge digital performances as simply not theatre, no appropriate substitute for traditional dramatic art, with its delineated performance spaces and times and its physically present actors and spectators. This disapproval has added to existing distaste for the theatre's adoption of innovations of the digital age: elements such as livestreaming, virtuality, social media integration, and motion capture.

W.B. Worthen's *Shakespeare, Technicity, Theatre* is thus a fortuitous arrival and intervention into this ongoing conversation regarding what makes theatre really *theatre*. His engagement with these issues tackles the question of how much performance technology is too much performance technology, transforming it into a declarative statement: performance *is* technology; made up of tools and mechanisms including but not limited to text, actors, costumes, sets, lights, and audiences. Theatre has hardly been invaded or corrupted by the advances of the twenty-first century; rather, theatre has always been technological, and has always made use of whatever emergent tools can serve its purposes, whether books, electric lights, or video game narrative constructions. Thus, Worthen incisively identifies theatre as tekhnē, an ongoing practice of making or doing.

Worthen's introductory first chapter theorizes his study's core concepts: theatre, medium, and technology. Worthen establishes his concept of tekhnē in performance: the very art form of theatre is itself a technology which utilizes and remediates other technologies. Mediation, remediation, and even hypermediation are not innovations of the modern digital theatre; rather, when Hamlet uses a book to provoke Polonius in act 2, scene 2 of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare is using a relatively new tool of his time to dramatize forms of representation onstage. Worthen juxtaposes his analysis of this Renaissance technology with similar mediations throughout dramatic history, proving theatre's enduring, constantly emerging technicity. From the periaktoi of the ancient Greek stage to the tape recorder of

Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* to the live video projections of Thomas Oster-meier's 2008 *Hamlet* at the Schaubühne: everything in theatre is technology, and therefore Worthen may deconstruct and analyze this everything for its uses, contexts, and unspoken values.

In chapter two, 'The Face, the Mask, the Screen: Acting and the Technologies of the Other', Worthen begins his analysis with theatre's most human technology, the face, via Emmanuel Levinas's misrepresentation of theatre as creating a 'seductive image' (59) which precludes the possibility for ethical relationship between actors and spectators. Worthen presents an array of productions which varyingly depict, dehumanize, petrify, and rehumanize the face on stage, demonstrating both the advantages and limitations to Levinas's standard. This chapter exposes the inherently mediatory quality of theatre — even an element as natural as the face may be occluded from the audience's spectatorship (whether through digital or analog technologies), disproving the popular misconception that there is such a thing as pure or 'unmediated' theatre.

Worthen further develops this revelation in subsequent chapters; chapter three, 'Shax the App', offers a fascinating exposure of the mechanics and values of digital applications designed for teaching Shakespeare. Most of these apps, in Worthen's analysis, represent knowledge of Shakespeare as a product of reading, accessed in pure form via screen-to-consumer delivery of the play text. Information on possible staging choices is sidelined in a user's interaction, and this approach therefore neglects the shifting tekhnē of performance by positioning the text as paramount. This text-centric focus is not only a problem of modern technologies for script-reading, however; Worthen plays on the physical gesture of scrolling (how an app user navigates Shakespeare on a device) by contrasting it with an early modern actor's use of a physical scroll as a cue-script in rehearsal. The very tools used to access a play determine its readers' engagement with it — Worthen therefore suggests again that a pure experience of theatre is impossible.

After his detailed exposures of specific technologies such as the actor's face and the playscript, Worthen expands his scope to consider entire productions and theatrical styles. In chapter four, 'Interactive Remediation — Original Practices', he unmasks the nostalgic façade of Original Practices (OP) productions of Shakespeare which, rather than presenting the Bard unmediated (as such performances purport to do), present selectively mediated performances with their own twenty-first-century biases and prescriptions. While OP markets itself as rejecting the technological invasions of Modern Practices (MP), Worthen drily notes that this stance often results in using more rather than less technology, as in the case of the American Shakespeare Center's Blackfriars Playhouse having to install additional

electronic lighting to create a natural daylight look for its OP performances. Such convolutions for the sake of OP lead Worthen to describe the theatrical trend as a 'mangle of practice' (140), blending mediations and technologies as it pleases to achieve a deceitful end: granting spectators an illusion of historicity.

In chapters five and six, 'Designing the Spectator' and 'And Or And Not — Recoding Theatre', Worthen moves to consider two twenty-first-century theatrical technologies: video game-style immersion in productions like Punchdrunk Theatre's *Sleep No More* and algorithmically-coded performance as in Annie Dorsen's *A Piece of Work*. As with his analysis of OP, Worthen exposes the deceit at work in immersive theatre; interactive productions design their spectators as 'free' to roam throughout the performance, suggesting a liberated audience — but such productions prescribe these freedoms and render the spectator into a prosumer (one who creates what they consume), facilitating the theatrical act by their participation. Worthen critiques this style as symptomatic of a contemporary cultural push toward individual empowerment; in the immersive theatre, spectators are empowered yet still absent: 'Same difference' (174). Worthen's analysis of the coded theatre of *A Piece of Work* suggests a distinct but equally distancing effect: algorithmic drama which spews out playscripts randomly via live coding creates performance as 'deformance' (193); emphasizing the failure of all attempts at pure mediation. A production like *A Piece of Work* is literally a performance of the text of *Hamlet*, but the play is not performed in a traditionally intelligible way; as such, Worthen suggests that *A Piece of Work* exposes the theatre's dependence on text as the paramount technology for mediating meaning.

Worthen's breadth of approach to technicity in the theatre is impressive, as is his scrupulous attention to detail in dismantling theatrical technologies to examine their inner workings and hidden motivations. While *Shakespeare, Technicity, Theatre* focuses mainly on the mediation of the Bard on historical and modern stages, Worthen's articulation of the tekhnē of theatre transcends boundaries of genre or playwright and could easily be applied to critical study of other, non-Shakespearean theatrical forms. Worthen is highly attuned to both theatre and literature scholars' current preoccupations as the field of theatrical performance continues its age-old and ever new wrestling with problems of mediation, interpretation, and interactivity. This latest release is therefore powerful in its flexibility — a book accessible to the readership and remediation of scholars, dramatic artists, and audience members alike.