

conflict, and disappointment, as well as possibilities for lasting and widespread positive changes.

Situated within this rich interdisciplinary terrain, the projects featured in both volumes challenge traditional assumptions about theatrical agents, customs, and processes. The projects often blur the boundaries between theatre and other fields, including development work, social work, law, sociology, and psychology. As such, the essays would be of value to a wide variety of scholars in the social sciences and humanities. Readers of the two volumes will benefit from their coverage of a multiplicity of ways in which theatre engages and is engaged by scholars and practitioners from diverse backgrounds in innovative, creative, and meaningful ways.

ERIN HURLEY

National Performance: Representing Quebec from Expo 67 to Céline Dion.

Toronto: U Toronto P, 2011. 244 pp. Illus., index.

ALAN FILEWOD

With the election of a Parti Québécois minority government in 2012 and the promise of a referendum under the shadow of political violence, Quebec sovereignty is again on the national agenda. In the aftermath of the attempted assassination of Premier-elect Pauline Marois on the night of the PQ victory, Céline Dion headlined a benefit concert in aid of the family of Denis Blanchette, the technician working the event who was killed by a politically motivated gunman. At that concert, Dion was the ostensibly Québécoise face who legitimized the presence of anglophone musical stars (Arcade Fire, Ben Harper, Patrick Watson, Martha Wainwright, and Anna McGarrigle) who shared the stage with Québécois artists (Coeur de pirate, Dumas, Eric Lapointe, Vincent Vallières) to isolate the shooter as a lone madman and to deflect the fear of a reactionary anglo terrorism.

I refer to Dion as the “ostensibly” Québécoise face because, as Erin Hurley shows in this supple and provocative examination of the procedural rhetorics of Quebec’s national performance of *québécoité*, Céline Dion (and her Americanized self, Celine Dion) troubles conventional readings of nation, performance, and representation. Her “inescapability” can only be understood by examining affect instead of signification; when we look at Dion’s

“emotional labours” we begin to perceive that although she is always a commodified and shifting signifier, she generates powerful affective response. Hurley makes the point that “Affect, in this case, provides the why of performance, the reason we must attend to it, even when we don’t particularly want to; it endows the performance with sense and impact—with its mattering and, to that degree, its meaning” (168).

Hurley’s examination and critique of national representation in performance is vastly more complex and wide-ranging than her title suggests. She does indeed begin with Expo 67 and its formulation of an urban, modernist *québécoisité*, and end with the multiplied affects of Celine Dion, but bridging them she examines the problem of gender politics and form in Tremblay’s *Les belles-soeurs*, Marco Micone’s *allophone* challenge to the narrative of the Québécois nation, and Carbon 14’s fragmented, assembled, and deconstructed imagist performance. In each of these cases Hurley offers extraordinarily sophisticated readings that bring critical reflection, performance analysis, and a suite of theoretical tools to bear on the problem of the nation in performance.

Over the past twenty years, since Homi Bhabha changed the conversation by shifting understandings of nation in cultural production from representation to performance, we have seen increasingly nuanced understandings of both of the constituent terms, of nation as it dissolves into contested nationhoods, intercultural constructions, subjunctive aspirations, racializations and genderings, and of performance, as it opens into the broad reach of Performance Studies and the problematics of phenomenology. It has become too easy, if not glib, to speak of the nation as an enactment, or the nation as constructed in performance. Hurley’s brilliant contribution in this book had been to materialize and resituate the concept of nation-as-performance to what she describes as “performing arts’ mimetic labours vis-à-vis the nation” (142) in a materialist semiotics grounded in feminist theory. She positions her project explicitly as a “feminist, Québécois rejoinder” to my own work on nation/performance, in which she “marks and *un*masks the infrastructure of ‘national’ performance, namely emotional labour and women (as both figures and actual people)” (18).

If nation/performance can be unmasked to reveal its gendered work, then it must be possible to analyze any moment of cultural production in those terms. Hurley’s solution to the problem of selection is the real strength of this book. Each of her case studies addresses a different stage of her reordered taxonomy of

the rhetorics of nation and *québécoité*, working through, successively, construction, reflection, metaphor, simulation, metonymy, and affect/affection, defined as “modes of ‘mattering’ dispositions” (147). In each case the exemplary text exposes fracture lines in Québec modernity and challenges an historical identity that has traditionally been articulated through low-mimetic and iconic masculinity.

In her discussion of the cool urban modernism of Expo 67, and particularly of the young women who worked the front-line of reception as hostesses, Hurley critiques the constructivist model of national performance by investigating the “symbolic re-annexation of Quebec for Québécois” (58). It is here that she develops the concept of emotional labour that is the conceptual underpinning of the book, and links it both to nation (as a process of facilitating affective responses) and to feminism, as it works through the bodies and labours of women. She follows this through in her very persuasive reading of *Les belles-soeurs*, in which she dissects the representational modes of iconic realism and theatrical formalism to demonstrate how the play was (and is) “unassimilable” to representationalist readings that reduce it to a national metaphor, in which “the all-female cast stood in for an all-male polity” (61).

Metaphor, Hurley explains, harmonizes signifier-signified relations and, as these first two case studies show, does so at the expense of women. Her three remaining case studies examine what she calls “mimetic figures” through structures of difference, not similitude. She examines Marco Miconé’s work (particularly his manifesto *Speak What*) as an Italian-Québécois other in the imaginary of *québécoité* in terms of simulation, in the Baudrillardian sense of a copy without an original; in this case the immigrant experience functions as a simulation of *québécoité* while at the same time challenging from within, rather than from an “outside” as “*les autres*.” In her analysis of Carbone 14, she sees the operation of metonymy, of “multivalent” imagery and decomposed dance that moves beyond allegory to an assembled, shifting, and reflexive play of icons of national experience. And as we have seen, in her analysis of Céline Dion she sees the play of affect in the life of the postmodern nation. In her conclusion, she returns to the question of the feminist presence in a “mythology of male national self-engenderment” (170), with a discussion of emblematic feminist theatre work, touching on the collective work *La nef de sorcières*, Pol Pelletier’s *Joie*, and Jovette Marchessault’s *Les Vaches de nuit*.

The achievement of this book is the way in which it manages to interweave two distinct projects, offering a feminist reconception of nation-as-performance and a history of *québécois* in performance. In this second project I find that I have unanswered questions that derive from Hurley's very assured, polished, and sometimes arch writing. It is expressive of intellectual rigour and works through its arguments with dazzling skill. At times, though, it strikes me as distanced and perhaps reluctant to address its own positionality. This may be a consequence of what I see as the one striking absence in her discussion, and that is the recurrent question of anglophone presence in *québécois*. I would be fascinated to see how she reads David Fennario, whose self-position as a minoritised Anglo-Québécois is resolute but unwelcome in *québécois*. Or what she does with Arcade Fire sharing a stage with Céline Dion.

JUDITH RUDAKOFF, ed.

TRANS(per)FORMING Nina Arsenault: An Unreasonable Body of Work

Chicago: Intellect Ltd.-The University of Chicago P, 2012. 264 pp.

ZAREN HEALEY WHITE

TRANS(per)FORMING Nina Arsenault undertakes the ambitious task of presenting and examining the many forms of this transgendered Canadian aesthete's multifaceted "body of work." As an anthology with a range of essays responding to the diverse avenues of inquiry provoked by this complex woman, the book succeeds in capturing the theatrical, creative, performative, and spiritual conundrums *embodied* by Nina Arsenault.

Through one-woman stage performance, self-portraiture, and the daily enactment of her hyper-femininity, Arsenault's "body of work" is her evolving physical and spiritual self. In her transition from man to woman and from woman to goddess, Nina Arsenault has undergone over sixty cosmetic surgeries and procedures costing approximately \$200,000. Funded primarily through sex trade work, Arsenault's transition is a story of literal self-fashioning through a process of surgical alterations over eight years. As an artist, Arsenault uses the aestheticization of the female form as fodder for her highly personal, carnal, and challenging art practice; that is, she engages with the female form as material object and ideological construct, with transgender