



Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

8 February 2017

To the Dissertation Defense Committee of Jan Suk,
Arts Faculty,
Charles University-Prague

Internal examiner's report on a doctoral thesis authored by

Mgr. Jan Suk entitled

**"The Poetics of Immanence:
Performance Theatre of Forced Entertainment" (2016)**

Mr. Jan Suk attempts in his doctoral thesis "to map the transformative, liminoid relationship between the performers and the audience, the territory 'between the real and the phantasmatic' wherein a theatre of Forced Entertainment explores the potentiality of proximity to achieve an intimate bond with their spectators" (9). The critical literature on which Suk builds is not extensive as he notes on pages 10-11. His 226-page study includes five chapters, a conclusion, and a works cited.

As for the prose, there are lapses in style that should be corrected for the final version of the text that will be submitted to the archive: here are some corrections that should be incorporated: delete "me" from "illuminating me" (iv); "this dissertations profited" should be "this dissertation profited" (v); "most notably willing for the discussions with" (v) should change a word or more for clarity's sake; "a collaborate" should be "a collaboration" (9); "operates as continuum" should be "operates as a continuum" (9); "to cover company's" should read as "to cover the company's" (10); "The chapter aim to demonstrate" should be "The chapter aims to demonstrate" (10); "is thus build" should read "is thus built" (10); "of company's performance pieces" should be "of the company's performance pieces" (11); "rather that the creative approach" should be "rather than the creative approach" (13); "the Deleuze's treatment of" should read "Deleuze's treatment of" (20); "the presents thesis argument's" should read with one less space between 'the' and 'presents' as "the present thesis argument's trigger" (21); "the Deleuze's treatment of" should be "Deleuze's treatment of" (22); "is the and activate the again" (24) needs to be rewritten; "the potentials well as risk" should be "the potentials as well as the risk" (25); "a far more g spectator-challenging territory" (26) needs to explain what "g" means if anything at all; from a quote it seems "the" may need deletion "attempts to the recreate stability and order" (28); a quote from p. 263 in *A Thousand Plateaus* should read not as "if points" but as "of points" (31) [this is repeated



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again on p. 53 in the thesis, and so should also be corrected there]; “methods a technique” (36) needs a space removed between ‘methods’ and ‘a’; “a stranger to oneself: s transformative process” (43) needs to be rewritten; “Like in the” should be “As in the” (162) and indeed the use of “like” in this part of the thesis should on many occasions be changed to “as”. There are other examples of mistakes, but these are representative, and so the doctoral thesis merits combing through by the candidate, to make it as clean as possible for the permanent archive. The thesis also lacks commas where they are needed; this is a general feature. Another problem is the absence or lack of definite and indefinite articles.

Concerning the substantial content of the thesis, for Suk, “The poetics of Forced Entertainment is an invitation to participate in the failure producing flux of live events manoeuvring between and betwixt the real and imaginary” (25). This provocative statement illuminates a basic thesis for the work. We also read of how, “The self-organizing nature of theatre as according to Cull will be closer examined in chapter two, in the connection with pure immanence” (39) thereby tossing light on the trajectory of the volume. Furthermore, the candidate claims that, “This overall task of the project is to highlight the aspect of humanity, life within theatre productions; the moments that Etchells realizes” (40). A particularly fine section may be located in Chapter 2, where the candidate injects some invigorating and astute summaries of any number of Deleuzian and Guattarian concepts such as multiplicity, event, virtuality, haecceity, rhizomatic, becoming, line of flight, deterritorialization. This unit of composition stands out as particularly strong for making clear difficult concepts.

For example, a nice analysis occurs where the candidate writes of Deleuze’s plane of immanence as “a section of chaos which acts like a sieve” (56); there is also an interesting section devoted to Derrida’s *The Truth in Painting* (1987) that with its analysis of the parergon from Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* throws light on the problem of the inside and the outside of the artwork. Suk aptly uses this as a way to enter the problem of the distinction as he puts it “of the boundaries of art and life [...] the boundaries between theatre and reality” (65). This brings me to my first question, namely, 1) how does the foregoing statement from the thesis conceptualize a notion of aesthetic space?

To begin Chapter 4 Suk claims succinctly that, “As argued in the three preceding chapters, the immanence of live production is the result of a devised, collaborative bottom-up approach, rather than top-down theatre with the transcendent force of a director, author or dramaturg present” (117). A fine analysis of the subjectivity of the subject of the performer for Forced Entertainment occurs on p. 124, and an intriguing assessment of silence with the aid of John Cage occurs on p. 128 as well as on p. 135 where we read, “Silence here functions as the trigger to self-reflexion” (135). We also read in an important point that: “The interest in the in-between-ness of Forced Entertainment, the constant relationship between the actor and the audience, the theatrical engagement of the company with the onlooker manifests the shift from the relationship between a performer and the audience: the rhizomatic relationship



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leading to a life—illuminating, immanent experience” (130). These observations powerfully resonate with Deleuze and Guattari’s co-authored philosophy including in their late style, *What is Philosophy?* A fine discussion of joy as ethics (pp. 164-165) and a solid part on desire and the real for Deleuze and Guattari occurs too (p. 167).

The idea of failure is also given interesting treatment toward the end of the thesis in the Conclusion, e.g., p. 201 and p. 204: “The thesis genuinely attempts to manifest that failure is one of the greatest qualities of theatre, philosophy and also writing, in its possible collapse of the fragile line between perfection and the disastrous” (201). And to close the work: “By being exposed to the experience of one’s own fragility, the realization is productive and transformative. A failure signals a life. That I have made mistakes means I am alive” (204). This nicely maps onto Deleuze’s own idea on the plane of immanence as interconnected to the concept and practice of life. And so it stands as an apt coda to the thesis. In this context, my second question is the following 2): how does any notion of an aesthetics of failure instruct the potency of a life, both aesthetically and existentially? My third question for the candidate would be to ask 3): what does he find the most under-developed area of his investigation that he would like to explore further in article form or otherwise, for example, and why?

I hereby recommend to the board, as external examiner, that this doctoral thesis be admitted to the next stage for the public defense. Be it noted too that the corrections to the thesis that I have mentioned should also in due course be performed. Assuming that this has happened, I would then be able to say that this thesis meets the standard requirements of a doctoral thesis, and I would therefore propose the grade of pass.

Sincerely,

Erik S. Roraback .

Erik S. Roraback, D.Phil. (Oxon.)
Director, American Literature and Cultural-Studies
Anglophone Literatures and Cultures
Charles University in Prague