Of Rasas and Bridges: Binarism and Sites of Hegemonic Contest in Richard Schechner's 'Rasaesthetics': A Critique

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Many Western performance theorists and practitioners capitalise on a Western and non-Western hybrid of performance traditions, aesthetic theories, and methodologies. While such intercultural hybridity draws long-overdue attention to histories beyond the Eurocentric experience, explicit intention weighs little beside the shaping forces of ideology and methodology. This article asserts that Western translators of culture, guided by a history of binaristic thinking, often subordinate non-Western cultural practises and theories to binaristic discourses and modes of representation. Indeed, Western practitioners and theorists of intercultural theatre may aim to 'solve' problems of intercultural distance through theatrical interpretation and inter-relation. However, operating within aesthetic and cultural binarisms, these practitioners only make more prominent the epistemological/ hermeneutical obstacle of an either-or, exclusionary praxis. The precise cultural vistas we seek are, from this angle, blocked by our very own epistemological frame. The article critiques the mechanics of Richard Schechner's historiographical discourse in 'Rasaesthetics', an article exploring the ancient Indian Sanskrit treatise on dance/theatre – The Natya Shastra *– and its impact on Western performance theory, in order to betray this contradiction between registers of intercultural literature. It aims to differentiate intended progressiveness from deep, structural hegemony that sabotages noble intentions with binaristic modes of representation.*

In his work on cultural appropriation, scholar on empire and identity Jonathan Hart addresses the strong human desire to connect across cultural distances: 'Who gets to say who owns what is a sobering question beside the human yearning for [...] unity without uniformity' (Hart 1997: 145). In their training and research, Western theatre practitioners are propelled by this yearning, motivated by an explicit desire to connect, protect, and respect differences as they capitalise on a hybrid of Western and non-Western performance traditions, aesthetic theories,

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and methodologies. Such intercultural hybridity, on the one hand, draws long-overdue attention to nuanced histories beyond the Eurocentric experience. However, explicit intention weighs little beside the historical shaping-forces of ideology and methodology. The premise of this article asserts that Western translators of culture, guided by a history of binaristic thinking, often subordinate – albeit unintentionally – non-Western cultural practises and theories to their binaristic discourses and modes of representation. That is, while Western practitioners and theorists of intercultural theatre may aim to 'solve' the problem of intercultural distance through theatrical interpretation and *inter*-relation, their project, operating within a set of aesthetic and cultural binarisms, only confronts and makes more prominent the epistemological/hermeneutical obstacle of an either-or, exclusionary set of praxis. The precise cultural vistas we seek are, from this angle, blocked from view by our very own epistemological frame.

In this article I critique the mechanics of Richard Schechner's historiographical discourse in 'Rasaesthetics', an article exploring the ancient Indian Sanskrit treatise on dance/theatre, *The Natya Shastra* and its impact on Western performance theory, in order to betray this contradiction between registers of intercultural literature – between an intended progressiveness and the deep structures of hegemony that sabotage these noble intentions with a binaristic mode of representation. The primacy of 'Rasaesthetics' is demonstrated in the fact that it currently remains, on the surface, a noble attempt to create what modern cultural theorists and critics name a 'third space': a space from which Westerners can view Eastern practises *outside* the politically problematic praxis of binaries. Yet, my examination of Schechner's comparative approach to organising Eastern and Western traditions on a cultural/ historical 'grid', and the binary-ridden discourse he engages to explain the workings of 'rasa', reveals how this apparently progressive spatial rethinking of intercultural relationships collapses atop a deep hegemonic impulse in thought. As he situates the 'Eastern other' into a scholarly space across from its Western counterpoint, Schechner's attempt to include Eastern histories within a Western performance tradition is sabotaged by a binaristic model of sense-making. Eastern traditions are forced into a Western framework, betraying the imperial logic still shaping anti-imperial projects today.

'Rasaesthetics' is a surface from which we may scratch the Western veneer of multicultural engagement to reveal beneath it a historically-fastened design of hegemony. Yet, clearing the way for future conversations, my argument also gestures to avenues for this design's deconstruction. As I uncover the hidden strata of binaristic attitudes and hegemonic motifs lying beneath Schechner's discussion of historical interrelationships, I brace performance researchers for a similar analysis toward the acting methods that influence real intercultural practise and inform future training. The motivation behind my critique is, ultimately, to consider how – or if – Western performance practise and theory might engage non-Western theatrical models without renewing the hegemonic boundaries.

Many scholar-practitioners have already endeavoured in their research to create bridges that enable them to travel theoretically and practically across the chasms that separate cultural performance traditions. An array of generated discourse exhibited in Patrice Pavis' 1996 volume on intercultural performance proves that intercultural conversations in performance studies have been well underway in recent decades.[1] Within the domain of theatre research, informing my paper's inquiry most are the scholar-practitioners who specifically examine the possibility of intercultural mediation and hybridity between modern Western-experimental and Indian aesthetic traditions, such as Eugenio Barba. Barba's study of pre-expressive scenic behaviour orients its transcultural dynamic around recurring principles among performance techniques. Barba asserts that when applied to physiological factors – weight, balance, use of the spinal column and the eyes – these principles produce physical, pre-expressive tensions which allow the performer's presence to attract the spectator's attention *before* any message is transmitted. His objective is to locate the space of theatrical exchange between actors and spectators prior to culturally identified behaviours – a space of embodied commonality that transcends cultural differentiation and distance in a pre-social sphere of communication. Jerzy Grotowski's *Theatre of Sources* research takes a similar approach to Barba's theory of pre-expressivity in its attempt to find the source from which different cultural theatre traditions emerge. Grotowski's research explores exercises that engage a process of psycho- physical and psycho-spiritual deconditioning and decolonisation of the body-mind in an effort to locate a 'sourcial' region which precedes cultural difference.

My own approach builds on this critical body of research, interrogating the dynamics of intercultural performance projects. But my focus, however, is on the valuable socio-historical structures that seem hidden or unspoken at the outset of these projects; that is, while inspired by the components of intercultural theatre these practitioners produce, I seek to isolate the binaristic dynamics within these spaces of discursive theory. Furthermore, few have taken a meta-approach and analysed how these discourses, though culturally conscious, often lean on a system of sense- making that supports the precise patterns of hegemony that their titles claim to collapse. I choose to focus on 'Rasaesthetics' because of its important stress on the spatiality of intercultural theatre as well as for the potential hegemonic patterns Schechner's process is either unaware or trying to evade. 'Rasaesthetics', I argue, betrays this contradiction between registers of performance

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[1] Patrice Pavis' edited volume *The Intercultural Performance Reader* cites definitive research on the intercultural performance project. Fischer-Lichte, Féral, Williams, Spiegel, Weiler, Tasca, Vitez, Neuschafer, Jeyifo, Banham, Potiki, Balme, Sun and Fei, Bharucha, Banu, Zarrilli, and Barker make vital contributions to the discourse on intercultural topics. Pertinent to my investigation, yet not mentioned due to limitations in scope and precision, are Carlson's discussion on Peter Brook and Ariane Mnouchkine's intercultural work relating to Indian tradition/myth.

theory, and re-discovers theatrical language as a spatial phenomenon, capable of performing powerful political and socio-cultural arrangements on the subtle level of semantics – of recreating hegemonic/imperial structures with their Western frames of logic. Ultimately, my close-readings of Schechner's discourse reify the divisive edges of binaristic thinking that prevail in Western rhetoric problematically smoothed by the Westerner's generous project of intercultural appropriation.

Drawing upon *The Natya Shastra*, a performance treatise written by the notable theatrical persona, Bharata Muni between 200 BC and 200 AD, scholar/practitioner Richard Schechner uses 'Rasaesthetics' to investigate rasa.[2] He proposes a model in which a performance practitioner can utilise space effectively to intentionally appropriate theatrical places in order to facilitate, and mediate, the process of creating a hybrid practise of acting methodologies – one that may be strategically liquidated in the rehearsal and performance of scenes and stage plays. However, while Schechner fashions a space for Indian aesthetic practise to enter Western identified spaces, his binaristic discourse (sampled below) fundamentally *ejects* the Indian aesthetic tradition from its own hermeneutical framework and retraces patterns of imperialist thinking. In his introduction below, Schechner posits the binary between West and East, opposing Aristotle's *The Poetics* and Bharata Muni's *The Natya Shastra*. This discourse of comparative intercultural historiography offered unhesitatingly in his preface immediately

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[2] My proposal of a spatially oriented critique of Western performance practice is grounded in a working knowledge of Rasa. Rasa is an ancient Indian concept that aims to frame the human phenomenon of performative reciprocity and shared, embodied emotional experience. What happens when rasa is 'happening' is twofold: on the one hand, rasa describes the non-physical transmission of emotions between party members (or even between parts of the self); a shared emotional experience – all the while refusing a binaristic mode of thinking, blurring the distinctions between these 'parts.' Rasa is a whole experience, not fragmented by subject/object, performer and audience, experiencer and observer. Rasa also describes the embodied act of constructing emotions through a performative, physical exchange. The eight emotions that constitute the rasas map energy within physical spaces, emphasizing equally the physical 'stage' of the body, as it does the emotions that this body/physical space can host and inspire in others. Ultimately, rasa's spatially attuned, embodied appreciation of emotions presents a new way of envisioning and potentially defending the physical and imaginary territory of the East / Other during the fragile project of intercultural adaptation. The spatiality of rasic experience enacts the social and the political through both metaphor and representation, a notion which warrants a full investigation into how Rasa is the object of intercultural transmission and the metaphorical playing field, or stage, upon which social activity, and criticism, are performed/viewed. Between my close-readings, one may provide windows into the study of rasa, whose very principles help us to reimagine solutions to the problematic of binarized-representation. However, this investigation is beyond the scope of this essay.

showcases the problematic binarisms in performance practise/theory that curtail inclusivity and inhibit progress towards true cultural multiplicity:

Aristotle's *Poetics* and Bharata Muni's *The Natya Shastra*, a Sanskrit manual of performance and performance theory, occupy parallel positions in European and Indian performance theory (and by extension, through the many areas and cultures where European-derived or Indian derived performing arts are practiced). Both ancient texts continue to be actively interpreted and debated, theoretically and in practice. Both are at or near the 'origins' of their respective performance traditions, both have evoked 'after texts' or 'counter texts' aimed at enhancing, revising, or refuting their basic principles. But similar as they are in some ways, the two texts differ profoundly. (Schechner 2001: 27)

In the excerpt above, Schechner models the human desire for unity, of which Hart spoke. His comparison between the positionality of Aristotle's *Poetics* and Bharata Muni's *The Natya Shastra* in Western and Eastern discourse seems guided by the universal compulsion to connect, to sift for sameness across vast geographical and historical distances. At first, Schechner's exercise in drawing 'parallels' seems to succeed in both projecting a new vision of intercultural commonality while also protecting the space between these diverse textual and geographic bodies and parts of the globe. In other words, just as one can observe the similarities between two parallel lines without bisecting or fragmenting them, so too can Schechner's language of parallelism seek 'unity without uniformity' – to point to the shared positionality that two diverse texts 'occupy' within their distinct cultures, while still respecting (and protecting) their differences. However, these generous structures of parallelism crumble atop the deeper binaristic structures that shape the logic of his prose. Sure, Schechner may propose spacious 'parallels' in the poetic register of his discourse. However, he defaults to a rhetoric of 'both' which collapses these structures into hegemonised fragments of intercultural intersection: 'Both texts continue [...] Both are [...] both continue' (27). In this excerpt, Schechner partakes in a strained game of cultural Venn-diagramming, searching for cross-cultural intersection that, constructed within the binary model of 'neither' or 'both', circumscribes our understanding of *The Natya Shastra* to its areas of imagined overlap with Western traditions. Rather than hosting a new space for *The Natya Shastra* to stand erect as a 'parallelling' cultural pillar to Western performance practise, the binaristic structures fashioning Schechner's discourse subject the East to Western modes of (historical) sense-making.

As evident in my analysis above, one cannot discuss problematically-envisioned 'positionality' between cultural texts and traditions without enlisting the language of geo-politics and its spatial grammar. To have subjectivity and power is to occupy 'space' both geographically and conceptually in scholarship. Scholars Edward Soja and Henri Lefebvre provide an eye- opening model of geo-political spatiality that can help us more accurately 'locate' the problematic configuration between Western centrality and Eastern peripherality underlying Schechner's

discourse. More importantly, their theories lay the critical groundwork for the imagination of a 'thirdspace,' a region of philosophical insight, investigation, and praxis that escapes, and thus challenges, conventional modes of binaristic thinking. Both Soja and Lefebvre assert that taking an approach like Schechner's – that is, drawing two sides of a continuum at the outset of historical analysis, despite attempts to draw lines of similarity across that continuum – signals the political order and, in turn, positions an exploited subject on the margins of a dominant group. Soja grounds his viewpoint in a spatial understanding of political and cultural contest, pointing to the ramifications of discursive analysis formulated with binary attitudes. Importantly, he calls our attention to the paradoxical usages of these binaries which are very much at work in Schechner's 'Rasaesthetics': binaristic models of 'difference' that lay epistemological foundations for hegemony may also structure more radical rhetorics of counter- culture and revision. Soja's analysis of Henri Lefebvre's philosophy of a third space, in turn, establishes grounds for another direct critique of Schechner's binaristic constructions. Soja asserts:

this *brute fashioning*, as the social and spatial production (and strategic reproduction) of difference, becomes the catalyst and the contested space for both hegemonic (conservative, order-maintaining) and counter-hegemonic (resistant, order-transforming) cultural and identity politics: the most general form of the center-periphery relation defined (and deconstructed) by Lefebvre. (Lefebvre 1991: 88, emphasis added)

Schechner's binaristic paradigm between his Western tradition and its Eastern counterpart/Other, enacts a 'brute fashioning' of theoretical space that transforms the discourse of theatre historiography into the site of cultural (hegemonic) contest. The attempted third space, made possible by the proposed interrelationship between two cultural 'places' – perhaps unintentionally – constructs a discursive region populated with spatial concepts such as 'center- periphery', a framework that positions central hegemonic powers against their peripheral subversive/marginal opposition. By fashioning binaries to propose a historiography, 'Rasaesthetics' becomes the site of 'hegemonic and counter hegemonic cultural and identity politics'. Schechner choreographs a spatial arrangement of 'center-periphery' that attempts to represent a cultural plurality, but which, by fault of its own binaristic methodologies, reiterates a single historical identity/perspective: the West.

Despite the popularised Barthesan notion of textual multiplicity,[3] 'Rasaesthetics' is a decidedly Western-reductionist assimilation inspired by the Hegelian

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[3] Roland Barthes clarifies that 'any given text is a "tissue of quotations" drawn from innumerable centers of culture' (Barthes, 146). When considering intercultural projects such as 'Rasaesthetics,' the Lefebvreian spatial arrangement may look entirely different (in reversed form) if voiced from within India. For example, the West thus occupies the space on the periphery of an Indian/Eastern centre.

post-enlightenment impulse to posit theories built on dualistic exercises in thinking. In other words, discourses such as Schechner's, demonstrate Judith Butler's theory of performativity, playing out historically and ideologically scripted 'precedents' that shape how a cultural history is both viewed and represented.[4] The primary aspect of history that writes the 'play scripts' of current intercultural discourses is, I argue, reductionism built into binaristic thinking. Lefebvre supports this view, also seeing binarisms as the 'root' of reductionist thinking. His perspective reminds us that binarisms are not just difficult to break because of their historical entrenchment, but because of their intellectual 'lure': the seductive satisfaction that attends deep oppositional structures, into which knowledge can be securely organised, or as Soja puts it, 'compacted' (Soja 1996: 60).[5] Binarisms, the dissection of information into two sides or oppositions, reduce phenomena into fixed categorical parallels. In these categories, all possible readings, functions, and mechanics of a phenomenon are abridged – and thus distorted – to fit within categorically rigid structures of Western thought. Not only is this praxis satisfying as it condenses complex phenomena into digestible, identifiable parts; it is also useful, a utilitarian mode of interpretation that, like our imperial history, subordinates one point of view to another, and prioritises efficient, economical modes of reasoning over a more complex, multifaceted hermeneutical framework. Binarisms are seductive precisely for their 'usefulness', and usefulness, in the context of Western/European history, is defined not by one's ability to embrace multiplicity, but to streamline it, to tame it, within a practical praxis of thought. Through such streamlining, the vast readings of a culture's aesthetic lose their subjunctivity, their 'as if'. Seduced into a 'productive' methodology of facile comprehension, all imagined interpretations as to an aesthetic's horizon of intersectionality become delimited, fixed within the enclosed region of a finite parallel. That is, while this reductionist vantage is accessible and amenable to the Western mind – both the individual mind and the collective, historical mind of Western thought – it manufactures hermeneutic borders that exclude a possible 'third' reading. This third reading would exhibit how one or more of the binary elements yields additional dialectics, parallels, or thirdings.

Returning to Schechner's juxtaposition of Aristotle and Bharata Muni, we see more clearly how he relies on these reductionist forms to set up his 'culturally inclusive' argument. However, yielding to the 'lure' of binaristic thinking, 'Rasaesthetics' pushes the precise Eastern practises it pretends to embrace to the

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[4] As Butler maintains, all social role-playing is actively (albeit unconsciously) scripted by the social constructs and historical patterns that precede it. 'Performativity,' cites Butler, 'implies that discourse has a history that not only precedes but conditions its contemporary usages' (19).

[5] In his review Soja writes, 'For Lefebvre . . . reductionism in all its forms, including Marxist versions, begins with the lure of binarisms, the compacting of meaning into a closed either/or opposition between two terms, concepts, or elements' (60).

periphery of a Eurocentric discourse. Schechner explains, 'Aristotle specialized in dividing knowledge into knowable portions [...] he formulated the syllogism' (28). Here, Schechner places a historical figure as one side of a binary. He categorises Aristotle as a reductionist who pioneered an aesthetic process that breaks down artistic elements into simpler, more fundamental units of comprehension. After installing Aristotle as one binary element, Schechner then posits the second element of the binary through defining *The Natya Shastra's* author, Bharata Muni. By establishing Bharata Muni's opposition to that of Aristotle in 'Rasaesthetics', Schechner creates a binary that seals intercultural discourse within the binary's parameters. He writes, 'Bharata Muni is a mythic-historical figure, the name of the author or compiler of a very detailed compendium concerning religious-mythic origins and practises of *natya,* a Sanskrit word not easily translatable, but reducible to dance-theater-music' (28). Here, Aristotle and Bharata Muni are placed in opposition along a historical spectrum. The second significant binary operating here is between the 'religious-mythic' and epistemology. That is, on one side of the binary, there is Aristotle linked to knowledge and knowability while on the other Bharata Muni is fastened to religion-myth.

Arguably, all projects of discernment are motivated by an underlying platform of similarity. Schechner's delineation between Eastern and Western histories, while problematically divisive, is prompted by a premise of connectedness, each differentiation framed by strong parallels between Aristotle's *Poetics* and Bharata Muni's *The Natya Shastra* and their respective historical personalities/contributions. However, Schechner's binaristic drawing of historical personae is carried out by an Aristotelian mode of epistemological analysis that should re-sensitise us to the pitfalls of Western praxis in intercultural conversations. His discourse attempts to 'divide knowledge into knowable portions'. What Schechner is trying to form is a knowledge of intercultural aesthetic origins made intelligible through distinct epistemological categorisations, or 'texts'. Therefore, the analysis Schechner executes becomes a site of hegemonic contest, a space wherein a Western framework is intended to define the political-historical nature of an Eastern Other using the terms the Western framework represents. Reiterating Lefebvre's spatial mapping of identity politics as they play out on the stage of intercultural performance in 'Rasaesthetics', the religious-mythic aspect of Indian aesthetics is locked into a binary that its Western counterpart created through its epistemological lens. As a result, with its stress on knowledge through reductionism, the discourse is defined primarily by a Western centre whose mode of analysis marginalises the Eastern binary element when its intended purpose was to bring the Eastern element into greater relief.

As the critics above suggest, theoretical moves that appropriate historical moments using binary opposition divide cultural performance not only across time, but across space. It is this spatial dimension which, it seems, is the most crucial prerequisite to hegemony. Barbara Harlow critiques Edward Said, along

with Soja and Lefebvre, amassing their contention toward the processes of historical-spatial mappings of power, pointing out the need to re-form geographical configurations of power structured by a central source that articulates a historical progression of itself in opposition to its Other. Ultimately, Said's and Soja's spatial engagement with colonial theory and Eastern- Western politics fortifies my own engagement with the theatrical spaces of theatre, and the theoretical spaces (such as 'Rasaesthetics') designated for the former's representation. Harlow writes of their work,

> Said engages explicitly in the project of a radical reconstruction, around the issue of geography, of the ascendant linear narrative of history led masterful from the center. Colonialism and the national liberation struggles waged against its controlling influence articulate not just a temporal sequence, but a critical re- elaboration of geopolitical spatial arrangements and the politics of place, what Soja presents – even if with a residual Eurocentric bias – as the 'conjunction between periodization and spatialization'. (Harlow 190-91, citations omitted)

What can be drawn from Harlow is that historical analysis does more than provide a simple overview of the historical events, personae, and concepts that mark Western and Indian aesthetics. Rather, historical analysis appropriates the theoretical 'place' into what Soja calls 'a spatiality of sites' that host the production of cultural historicities, sociality, and representation, while simultaneously inviting this place to materialise into a theatrical space. In other words, 'Rasaesthetics' is a theatrical *space* of its own, performing historically preconditioned patterns of hegemony on the stage of its own discourse, and making interpretive arrangements between Eastern and Western elements that project the geographical and political binarisms of an imperial/colonial era.

As we read on in 'Rasaesthetics', Schechner's rhetorical strategy of compare and contrast continues and, with it, his performance of the West's historic pattern of dualistic thinking. In the following section he provides a 'portrait' of *The Natya Shastra*, highlighting only those qualities which can be placed *in opposition to* those defining Aristotle's *Poetics*: 'Furthermore, *The Natya Shastra* is a *shastra,* a sacred text authorised by the gods, full of narration, myth, and detailed instruction for performers. The *Poetics* is secular, focused on the structure of drama, and dependent on the logical thinking its author helped invent' (Schechner 2001: 28). The theoretical (and thus theatrical) space Schechner stages here with his discernment between two Eastern/Western texts retraces the binaristic model with which he launched 'Rasaesthetics' in its preface. He voices a historical narrative ripe with oppositions: sacred-god authored/secular; narrational-mythic/logical. Crucially, this comparative performance comes dangerously close to what Homi Bhabha called a 'transparent norm', defined as 'a norm given by the host society or dominant culture, which says that "these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within *our own grid*"' (Bhabha 1991: 208, emphasis added). Schechner aligns each quality of *The Natya Shastra* with a Western correspondent; he

pretends to 'discover' the uncharted relationship between two diverse cultures and histories. However, his method belies another intention: through his apparatus of binaristic models, Schechner is legitimising Eastern Sanskrit theatre, lending it a secular subjectivity by finding its precise placement on a Eurocentric 'grid' of similarity and difference. That is, he is not finding *The Natya Shastra'*s place on a map, he is *giving* it one – a culturally condescending exercise that less strengthens the East's and West's connecting historical ligaments than it does injure an intercultural trust with forced application of the latter's binaristic logic.

Theatre performance appears spontaneous, active, improvisatory, and expansive. This effect gives performative dramas their fundamental 'live' aspect. However, as we know, performances, even the most 'live'-seeming, are highly arranged. Their improvisatory divergences are set within parameters, structured, scripted, scored. Thus, while Bhabha's statement may not have alluded to theatre per se, his notion of a 'grid' lends itself well to the structured, fixed theatrical context/space of a stage, and suggests that the binarism shaping 'Rasaesthetics' lies not only in Schechner's discursive modes of representation and interpretation, but in the theatrical setting for which his theories are intended. In intercultural theatre, the stage is an appropriated place, upon which behaviour is distributed, perceived, learned, experienced, and practised. Like binaries and grids, the stage holds the capacity for division of spatial regions, or units, through which performers can walk, dance, speak, and so on, according to the practitioner's framework of theatrical activity. Theatre spaces, like the scholarly space gridded by binaristic praxis, can also be made finite, limiting (performance) praxis to a defined area of action and observation. In other words, the Western stage is itself, a concrete 'grid' that enacts the same delimiting binaristic praxes that structure an intellectual space of cultural interpretation. As a result, the space that Western theatre gives for interpreting the aesthetics of another culture invites this culture into that space, while simultaneously dividing and enclosing the other culture.

It is precisely at the point of theoretical beginnings, Bhabha's research points out, where the place *for* a stage may be decided as either a space of subjunctivity where imagined third readings are sought after or, alternatively, as a space of linear binaries where the intercultural play – wherein cultural diversity finds its improvisation, perception, representation, identity – is 'contained' by its own finite rules of engagement. Bhabha states, 'This is what I mean by *creation* of cultural diversity and a *containment of cultural difference*' (208). Just like the binaries in Schechner's discourse that intend to include, but also problematically contain and circumscribe Indian traditions within a rigid grid of Western oppositions, so too the Western stage encloses the Indian aesthetics being dissected into its own structured parameters. Both aesthetics become grids that intend to expand intercultural discourse and knowledge but, instead, restrict this knowledge to the limits of meaning contained within the signifying parameters of the binary components.

Thus far, I have examined Schechner's heavy reliance on binaries to organise Eastern and Western traditions into a shared scholarly-theoretical space. I have also exposed these politically problematic dualisms where they are easily camouflaged beneath the generous intentions of intercultural engagement, union and connectivity, and explained their ultimate perpetuation of colonial-imperial and hegemonic impulses to divide, distort, and exclude. Finally, I have identified Schechner not as the culprit of these colonial patterns of interpretation, but as a product of a deeply historical script, a way of analysis and point of orientation for intercultural praxis that has long eclipsed the history of the cultural aesthetic of the Eastern 'other' by trapping it within the horizons of 'two' Western hegemonic categories.

In its interpretation of historical traditions, texts, figures, historical personae and founders of traditions, of knowledge, religion/myth, the sacred, and so on, 'Rasaesthetics' falls into the historically buried trap of binaristic thinking. Surfacing these pitfalls in Schechner's methods establishes the theoretical groundwork to identify Schechner's similarly problematic treatment of practical material: Western and Eastern acting methods. In a future review, I anticipate probing deeper into how 'Rasaesthetics' places two concepts of acting in opposition, one characterising the acting mechanics of his Western tradition, the other identified as the mechanics of rasa. In this way, Schechner engages the problem I have already identified in a practical space, whereby the interaction between praxis of performance (East-West) is mediated *un*-self-consciously through a Western method. The purpose of intercultural discourse is, alternatively, to create a hybrid method, a 'third space'. However, as my assertions suggest, this endeavour will fail when the mechanics of rasa with which practitioners attempt to assimilate into a Western space is, in the final analysis, carried out and defined by a Western apparatus of interpretation.

Spatial discourse is perhaps the most appropriate way to make aesthetic behaviours concrete, particularly as they fall within the discourse of intercultural performance theory. In the project of hermeneutical engagement (with intercultural performance studies) confronting the problem of binaristic attitudes and points of orientation is unavoidable. Yet, to refuse to deconstruct these binary attitudes and contest the discursive structures that have established who is speaking for whom is to risk eclipsing the very power, identity, and meaning of the cultures being interpreted, and transmitted, on the intercultural stage.

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