

Abstract

Elinor Fuchs has famously proclaimed the death of the classical character in postmodern theater and replaced it with a multiple subject on stage. The dissertation argues that alongside Fuchs' deconstructivist multiple subject an opposite movement is at play, reassembling character by negotiating ideals from the classical character concept. To supplement the understanding of character representation in performance theater, the dissertation presents the term *disincarnation*. As an assemblage of four traditionally colliding character concepts – the classical, Brechtian, Artaudian, and the postdramatic – disincarnation allows us to analyse character representation in between incarnation and deconstruction.

The American performer and filmmaker Jack Smith is presented as a case study for disincarnation. As a central figure in American underground cinema and performance art, Smith inspired among others Andy Warhol, who appropriated his superstar concept from Smith. Smith presented multiple drag characters and an abject aesthetic inspired by his obsession with the actress Maria Montez. Smith disincarnates Montez by appropriating her external characteristics but simultaneously exhibiting the constructed nature of this incarnation. Smith's Montez disincarnation comes with an ethical-political agenda that entails gender and capitalism-critical strategies. By identifying with Montez as a figure of abjection and failure, Smith resignifies the failed, abject or queer body exhibiting its positive possibilities and energies. The dissertation combines theatre and performance theory with Deleuze-Guattarian and new materialist theories to analyse how the disincarnation practice reassembles character as well as the body into dynamic phenomena.