

Abstract

Johansson, Birgitta, *Befrielsen är nära. Feminism och teaterpraktik i Margareta Garpes och Suzanne Ostens 1970-talsteater* (Liberation is at Hand. Feminism and Theatrical Practice in Margareta Garpe's and Suzanne Osten's Theatre of the 1970's). Swedish text with a summary in English. Department of Literature, Göteborg University, Box 200, SE 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden, 288 pages.

This thesis deals with three of Margareta Garpe's and Suzanne Osten's productions, *Tjejsnack* (Girls' Talk) 1971, *Kärleksföreställningen* (A Show about Love) 1973 and *Jösses flickor! Befrielsen är nära* (Gee girls! Liberation is at hand) 1974. The aim is to illuminate the linkage between the avantgarde theatre and the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970's in these productions. How did Garpe and Osten use the medium of theatre to raise consciousness in audiences and create new patterns of identification for women? In what way did the identity politics of the Women's Liberation Movement influence and develop their use of theatrical strategies? These questions are addressed in order to uncover structures of communication in: 1) the production work, 2) the performances and 3) the reviews in daily newspapers. In the first two areas, a discourse of gender is revealed in terms of its production and expression. In the third area, the critics' and debaters' reception of this discourse is explored. Garpe and Osten are viewed as equal voices in the feministic discussion together with their contemporaries, such as Juliet Mitchell, Germaine Greer, Sheila Rowbotham and Suzanne Brøgger. Their participation in the alternative theatre movement during the 1960's and 1970's is furthermore an important aspect of the analysis. Elin Diamond's theory of a feministic mimicry-mimesis and her ideas concerning feminist theatre which combine Brechtian aesthetics and a feministic interest in the gendered body are employed to clarify the ways in which Garpe's and Osten's theatre work questioned the patriarchal discourse of their time. Alberto Melucci's theories of heterogenous social movements acting in situations of conflict, in which the struggle against a common enemy has a unifying function, are vital to the reception analyses performed. In this context, significance is also given to Maud Eduard's idea of the representatives of the established order using concealment strategies in order to resist the threat of feminism.

Garpe and Osten provided tools for liberation and for creating futures according to the experiences and the hopes of the individuals in the audiences. The material from interviews was transformed into stories. In the theatrical narration and presentation these stories, balancing on the verge of the fictive and the biographical were combined with the elements from avantgarde and epic theatre. By means of this mixture, the ensemble created a mimicry-mimesis presenting an authentic and convincing story, clearly unfaithful to patriarchal truth. While undermining the ideology of the established order, the technique also provided for an alternative, feministic understanding of the events on the stage. Garpe's and Osten's theatre focused on the connection between theatrical narration and the discourse of patriarchal culture and questioned the concepts of truth and reality. The reviewers of the daily newspapers, also channelled their support or opposition into discussions about truth. The meaning of these concepts in their criticism is connected to theatrical forms of representation and discourses of reality. The reviews testify that the stories of female experiences were welcome contributions to the stage, but also that independent women, claiming the space of the stage for their liberating mission, were threatening. The representatives of the established order disguised their opposition to the feminist challenge by transforming it into discussions of other issues and by marginalizing and minimizing it.

Keywords: Margareta Garpe, Suzanne Osten, *Tjejsnack* (Girls' Talk), *Kärleksföreställningen* (A Performance of Love) *Jösses flickor! Befrielsen är nära* (Gosh Girls! Liberation is at hand), Theatrical Reviews, The 1970's, Feminism, Women's Liberation Movement, Female Experiences Avantgarde Theatre, Bertolt Brecht, Dario Fo, Alternative Theatre, Mimesis, Social Movements, Strategies of Resistance
Distribution: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion. Box 148, 241 22 Eslöv,
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