

# NTQ Book Reviews

edited by Bella Merlin

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Paul Whitfield White and Suzanne R. Westfall, ed.  
**Shakespeare and Theatrical Patronage  
in Early Modern England**  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.  
326 p. £45.00.  
ISBN: 0-521-81294-1.

As everyone knows, Elizabethan actors were the servants of the Lord Admiral, or the Lady Elizabeth, or whoever: this was a theatre of aristocratic patronage. But what did that mean? What did actors get from their patrons – and vice versa? How does patronage differ from, say, employment? How is it reflected in the scripts?

These questions – not new but by no means hackneyed – are the matter of this collection of essays by established Anglo-American theatre historians. The result has the strengths and weaknesses of collaboration. It is valuable to have so much expertise assembled in one place: we have Leeds Barroll's guide to the dynastic connections underlying the theatrical governance of the Careys, Spencers, and Howards; David Bevington and Mill Riggio's intriguing comparison between two court wedding masques a century apart; Sally-Beth MacLean's concisely packed biography of Leicester as a dramatic patron; and Michael Shapiro's lively footnote to his 1970s book on the children's companies.

What is lacking, however, is coherence. The coverage is haphazard: the collection tilts towards the sixteenth century, so that there are three overlapping discussions of the mid-1590s, but there is no comparable account of developments after 1603. And the approach is disabblingly miscellaneous. For instance, Paul Whitfield White's ideological narrative and Andrew Gurr's novelistic one don't so much disagree as diverge: though both are admirable, they don't belong in the same debate. Suzanne Westfall's opening essay tries to set out some organizing categories, but its methodological uncertainty reflects the diversity it hopes to reconcile.

The book's facts, then, are more convincing than its ideas. In particular, several contributions are troubled by a narrative whereby 'patronage theatre', based on gift, progressively gives way to 'commercial theatre', based on exchange. On the whole, this story is mentioned only to be dismissed: we know that history today is not supposed to produce narrative, still less evolutionary narratives about the transition from feudalism to

capitalism. Yet it creeps back in, as if no one is quite sure how to keep it out. An authoritative study of early modern theatre patronage would have to confront this and related issues head on. This is not what White and Westfall have produced, but their book will certainly be on the desk of whoever does.

PETER WOMACK

DOI: 10.1017/S0266464X04220188

David Schalkwyk  
**Speech and Performance  
in Shakespeare's Sonnets and Plays**  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.  
260 p. £45.00.  
ISBN: 0-521-81115-5.

More than most areas of Shakespearean scholarship, the Sonnets are distinguished by a recent history of remarkable work. The editions of Katherine Duncan-Jones and Stephen Booth are formidable, and the criticism of Heather Dubrow and above all Joel Fineman magisterial. Indeed, despite being almost two decades old, the latter's *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye* continues to be among the most challenging and insightful works of criticism in any area of Shakespeare studies. To this impressive list, David Schalkwyk adds a book of nuanced interpretation and careful scholarship.

However, perhaps in consequence of this daunting line-up, Schalkwyk's book acknowledges the influence of Fineman in particular with more than a little anxiety. He begins by taking Fineman as his 'foil', regarding his book as biasing Sonnet studies towards an analysis of emergent subjectivity at the expense of the sequence's intrinsic performativity. This latter issue, viewed predominantly through an Austinian lens, is the principal focus of the argument. The identified bias is predicated on an historicist understanding of the genre and a post-Lacanian reading of Petrarch that is, according to Schalkwyk, essentially incorrect.

Unfortunately, in his desire to engage in dialectic, Schalkwyk does small justice to the subtlety of Fineman's argument. Indeed, there appears to be curiously little justification for this engagement to begin with: although Schalkwyk's work does offer a corrective to some of Fineman's more generalizing rhetoric, there is no real reason not to see this as an effective companion piece to the earlier book, and indeed the work is possibly best seen in such a light. Fineman's argument thus benefits from the trenchant attention to detail and

belated emphasis on issues of performativity, nominalization, and embodiment demonstrated by Schalkwyk. And, even more helpfully, this careful and well-researched book often reads as an illuminating addendum to Fineman's broader theorizing.

At the end of his book, Schalkwyk expresses a hope for a combined, transdisciplinary approach to the Sonnets, which themselves, as he demonstrates, are richly cross-generic. Beyond the forced reaction to Fineman, the bulk of this work offers hope that such a reconciliation may not be long in coming.

JONATHAN HOLMES

DOI: 10.1017/S0266464X04230184

*George Taylor*

**The French Revolution and the London Stage, 1789–1805**

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

263 p. £40.00.

ISBN: 0-521-63052-5.

Few theatre scholars are as wedded to the 'real history' of class politics, of economic base and cultural superstructure as George Taylor, whose approach derives from a fundamental Marxism updated to take account of the 'political unconscious' of Fredric Jameson, the 'faultline' theory of Alan Sinfield, the 'new historicism' of Stephen Greenblatt and the materialist attitudes of other contemporary critics. On this occasion, Taylor juxtaposes the changes that took place in the French theatre as a result of the Revolution with English dramatic representations of those same tumultuous events.

Because his method is also sensitive to performative values, he is able to attribute theatrical effects to ideological causes which might seem to be at some considerable remove. Opening with George Colman's remarkable mixed-genre 'opera', *Inkle and Yarico*, with its theme of slavery versus liberty, he moves on to works that use past history to comment on present conflicts, to Gothic plays that reflect the Terror, to the contribution of the radical Thomas Holcroft, and to the invention of English melodrama. A concept of pre-Brechtian 'alienation' shows how plays that might seem to be either conservative or entirely apolitical in fact reveal their own origins within the conditions of cultural production at the time.

The recurrent images of dungeons, together with an escapist fondness for exotic foreign locations, tell their own significant story. Similarly, by engaging with critics who have sidelined the plays written by Romantic poets as a 'Theatre of the Mind', centred upon the morbid consciousness of impotent individuals, Taylor suggests that this drama actually struggles with the transition from an aristocratic to a bourgeois agenda.

If Taylor's indirect connections sometimes seem a little stretched, he can after all always justify his belief that the theatre of the period must be read metaphorically by reminding us that, in a state of political censorship, outright political reference to events across the Channel was a dangerous business. Widely researched and always provocatively argued, his important book opens up questions that can be fruitfully addressed by theatre historians and cultural theorists alike.

JOHN STOKES

DOI: 10.1017/S0266464X04240180

*Tracy C. Davis*

**The Economics of the British Stage, 1800–1914**

Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University

Press, 2000. 506 p. £60.00.

ISBN: 0-521-57115-4.

During the final decades of the eighteenth century, the relationship between business and culture, industry and art, was recognized not only by economists including Adam Smith but also by theatre managers such as John Philip Kemble. *The Economics of the British Stage* examines the business infrastructures underlying the increasingly diversified and complex forms of live performance within 'the theatrical marketplace' of their nineteenth-century successors, as Tracy Davis prioritizes 'capital rather than the actor' in an analysis of the theatre industry between 1800 and 1914.

Presented in three sections, Part One attends to competition and state involvement, suggesting how the free-trade-versus-protectionism conflict which dominated the British economy during this period affected the theatre's commercial vitality and repertoire. Davis details connections between stage and state long before twentieth-century debates over government funding, as the 'imperfect competition' of the patent system was replaced after the 1843 Theatres Regulation Act by the Lord Chamberlain's regulation of a wider marketplace.

Part Two identifies trends in profit and loss, acknowledging the endless variables that influenced profitability in theatre, as in any industry. The class and gender of entrepreneurs are shown to be significant here, echoing Davis's attention to female theatre professionals in previous work – particularly *Actresses as Working Women*. The final part of the book considers how changing labour markets and the marketing of theatrical products, most notably touring companies, defined theatre as commodity.

*The Economics of the British Stage* is a valuable companion to the work of theatre historiographers and social historians, including Michael Booth and Peter Bailey, who have suggested fundamental links between leisure and industry. Those researchers concerned with nineteenth-century

theatre will find this an indispensable text, and although an approach including statistical analysis is demanding (graphs and tables sometimes lacking adequate explanation), the links between economic theory and theatre are established by detailed case studies which incorporate surviving business records from individual theatres.

Only in the final pages, where parallels between film distribution and touring theatre in the first decades of the twentieth century seem hurried through, is such detail lacking. This subject matter does, however, emphasize the further potential of Davis's engagement with economic history as an approach that may help to define the significance of theatre as cultural object and market product alongside recorded media, and beyond 1914.

LUCIE SUTHERLAND

DOI: 10.1017/S0266464X04250187

David Bradby and Maria M. Delgado, ed.

**The Paris Jigsaw:**

**Internationalism and the City's Stages**

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002,

288 p. £14.99.

ISBN: 0-7190-6184-9.

This collection is, as Jim Carmody puts it, 'interested in Paris as a geographical and cultural locus . . . that is continually traversed by foreign theatrical performance'. Combining academic criticism with accounts given by theatre practitioners, the book explores the topic from twin perspectives. Where Part One analyzes in some detail the contributions to internationalism made by Parisian-based artists and teachers such as Peter Brook, Jacques Lecoq, Ariane Mnouchkine, and Augusto Boal, Part Two concentrates on the ability of the city to accommodate different international theatre traditions (German, Spanish, Argentinian, North American, and African).

Despite some fascinating insights, the second part of the book is less successful than the first. This is in no way related to the quality of the essays included, but is rather caused by what is left out. Why, for instance, is there no discussion of Polish, Algerian, and Asian theatre traditions? Equally, why is so little space given to the African theatre, particularly in the light of the crucial questions raised by Judith G. Miller in her hard-hitting interview with Sylvie Chalaye? By developing a view of internationalism which is over-reliant on European and North American 'presences', *The Paris Jigsaw* runs the risk of endorsing the very thing it is so concerned to avoid: an exclusionary concept of multiculturalism.

That is not to say, however, that the view of internationalism which emerges from the book is simplistic or naive. Though all those involved in *The Paris Jigsaw* agree that the French government

provides a conducive environment for international theatre research in Paris through generous subsidies and grants, none are blind to the economic and political factors involved in this process. Maria Shevtsova, in a perceptive essay, highlights just what France gets in return for its 'enlightened' cultural policy. Equally importantly, Paris is never romanticized in the book. Several contributors, notably Boal and Raul Fruti, stress the chauvinism of Paris and the difficulties experienced by foreigners there.

This desire to confront the darker realities of cultural politics is one of the great strengths of the book, for it means that while internationalism is seen as a politically progressive idea, it is never depicted as *un fait accompli*. Ultimately, *The Paris Jigsaw* is a valuable and comprehensive document, which should attract a wide specialist and non-specialist readership, and will be of particular interest to those involved in French and Theatre/Performance Studies.

CARL LAVERY

DOI: 10.1017/S0266464X04260183

Luc M. Gilleman

**John Osborne: Vituperative Artist**

Garland Science, 2001. 300 p. £55.00.

ISBN: 0-8153-2201-1.

Of all the playwrights to emerge in the 1950s, John Osborne's reputation has fallen furthest: Arden and Wesker are neglected and N. F. Simpson forgotten, but Osborne's decline was more absolute (lasting as it did from the early 'seventies to his death in 1994) and, owing to his sullen assaults on what he saw as the sacred cows of British liberalism, far more public than that of his contemporaries.

Osborne took great delight in burning his bridges – frequently before he had made it to the safety of the other side; his abiding image is of the archetypal angry young man who metamorphosed into an equally furious crusty old reactionary. This summary, though, might not have been that far from the mark: anger was certainly the engine that drove Osborne's work. As the subtitle of this book suggests, Osborne was a vituperative artist, whose work needed clearly defined targets if its rhetoric was to achieve its fullest effect. However, his anger was by its nature unassuageable; Gilleman correctly locates its source in the overwhelming sense of loss and failure that colours Osborne's work, from the earliest successes through the long descent of both his talent and his fame.

However, the chapters on the later plays are not as convincing as those on the earlier work (*A Sense of Detachment* and especially *Watch It Come Down* do not deserve the detailed study they get here), and there are some irritating slips (the

author reverses the central dynamic of Strindberg's *The Stronger*, and notes in passing that Caryl Churchill's 1987 city comedy is called *Easy Money*). However, in his discussions of the early work, Gilman's critical sense is sound, and his analysis of Osborne's developing style is useful. This text should be of particular interest to undergraduate students studying the post-war British theatre.

DAVID PATTIE

DOI: 10.1017/S0266464X0427018X

*Leslie Kane, ed.*

**David Mamet in Conversation**

Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2001.

264 p. £30.00 (hbk); £10.50 (pbk).

ISBN: 0-472-09764-4 (hbk); 0-472-06764-8 (pbk).

More than two decades since its first stage outing, the recent critically acclaimed revival at the Royal National Theatre in London of David Mamet's play *Edmond*, with Kenneth Branagh in the title role, serves as a timely reminder of the enduring international appeal of the work of this Chicago-born playwright and director.

Leslie Kane's volume will be an indispensable companion to anyone remotely interested in David Mamet's life and work, since it contains a number of fascinating and important interviews he gave between 1976 and 1999, as well as a useful chronology and comprehensive listing of his published and unpublished works. The writer's indefatigable output and astonishing industry are apparent in a closer examination of the range of work he has produced during a lifetime spent in theatre and film. As well as plays for the stage and screen, Mamet has written a number of thoughtful and provocative essays on the crafts of directing, writing, and acting, as well as some fiction and several books for children.

Several of the interviews in this volume are transcriptions by Leslie Kane of television interviews, such as with Charlie Rose from WNET-TV in New York and Melvyn Bragg's (1994) London Weekend Television's *South Bank Show*. It is particularly useful to have these brought into a wider public domain. The fact that Mamet is not always willing to answer questions put to him, perhaps on personal or family matters as well as his professional work, or that he adopts a provocative rather than a passive role in the interview chair when discussing the latter, makes a refreshing change and for robust and entertaining exchanges. Kane's chronological organization of the material helps give an overview of Mamet's development as writer and director over the last thirty years and provides a framework in which to contextualize his plays and films. This book is highly recommended.

CHRIS BANFIELD

DOI: 10.1017/S0266464X04280186

*Katherine Liepe-Levinson*

**Strip Show:**

**Performances of Gender and Desire**

London: Routledge, 2002. 256 p. £15.99.

ISBN: 0-415-17381-7.

Discussions of popular performances of nudity have tended to be based upon speculation, emotion, and political expediency, often relying on the positioning of a critic/spectator (as opposed to a participant) with limited personal experience of the subject matter. Katherine Liepe-Levinson visited over seventy North American strip clubs, bars, sex emporia, and theatres during what she calls 'the modern striptease boom' between 1989 and 1993. It is the extensive scope of her fieldwork in eight cities, her open-minded approach, her close observation of and (crucially) respect for the people whom she discusses (both performers and audience members) that make *Strip Show* an authoritative and important book.

While she is careful to rehearse the feminist, psychoanalytical, and Marxist-materialist critiques of commercial sexual entertainment, as well as their unlikely correspondence with right-wing conservative views, Liepe-Levinson clearly demonstrates that these are often limited in value and unable to accommodate the contradictory evidence she has encountered. Her argument is that social sexism, alienation, sexual representation, and fantasy 'do not operate as a single *seamless* system of oppression', and that strip shows as often complicate and make strange these systems as explicitly or implicitly support them.

The book's structure cleverly mimics the experience of the performance event itself: locating the show in terms of its cultural and geographic context; acclimatizing oneself to the interior architectural space and its environment; responding initially to the spectacles of costume and presentation; and learning the specific codes of spectatorship. The reader is teased with the promise of the main event, just out of sight, until the fourth chapter: that is, the activities of the performer's body.

*Strip Show* is clearly intended to appeal to the widest possible readership. Its resulting fluidity, however, creates a few inevitable shortcomings: occasionally, theoretical frameworks are overly simplified and too much interesting material is buried away in the endnotes. These are minor criticisms within its overall context and achievement – including the misuse of the term 'co-ed' to refer to mixed-sex entertainment environments and, much more importantly, the need to distinguish more thoroughly between 'real' strip shows and performance art events that utilize and explore their tropes (such as those by Annie Sprinkle). Liepe-Levinson has deliberately chosen

to focus on strip shows intended for white, heterosexual, 'straight' audiences (both male and female); I very much hope she continues her work by analyzing exotic dance events excluded from this study – that is, performances for spectators who locate themselves primarily outside dominant cultural spaces.

ROBERTA MOCK

DOI: 10.1017/S0266464X04290182

*Kathleen Gallagher and David Booth, ed.*

**How Theatre Educates: Convergences and Counterpoints with Artists, Scholars, and Advocates**

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003. 272 p. \$27.95.

ISBN: 0-8020-8750-7.

This book marks a significant moment in drama and theatre education. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, there was considerable debate about the relationship between theatre practice and education, and different pedagogical models were being hotly contested. Many of the discussions were centred on binary oppositions – on process/product, drama/theatre, nature/culture – positions which often became increasingly fixed and polarized during the debate. Gallagher and Booth's collection of essays and interviews with Canadian drama practitioners and academics succeeds in negotiating a space between these oppositions, offering powerful readings of different artistic, pedagogical, moral, ethical, and cultural questions inspired by work in theatre education. In her introduction, Gallagher states that there is no 'correct pedagogical model for drama education' and she raises questions about how theatre education might open up for discussion alternative aesthetic representations of 'self' and 'other'. This tone of inquiry is echoed by many of the contributors to the book, whose discussions of theatre pedagogy are often grounded in practical experience.

The book is divided into six sections, each of which reflects a different aspect of theatre education. The editors have grouped together areas such as 'Theatre for and with Young Audience' and 'Culture, Community, and Theatre Practices' which offer useful signposts to the reader. Many of these areas overlap, and the contributors share many educational interests and political commitments. The volume begins to address what Gallagher has called 'how' questions – how drama is structured for learning – which are ultimately connected to questions of power and authority. This book has, therefore, central methodological and political questions at its core. In different ways many of the contributors interrogate who owns knowledge in theatre pedagogy, and question how this knowledge is used.

One of the common strands in this volume is an interest in narrative. Many of the contributors use autobiography as a framing device for their discussions, and the idea that personal narrative provides evidence for the educational value of theatre practice is often implicit. Some authors confront ideas of narrative more directly. Belarie Zatzman's chapter thus focuses explicitly on the dramatic power of witness in her work with young people on the Holocaust, which narratives she describes movingly as 'acts of discovery and questioning'.

Perhaps the most successful chapters are those in which the writers offer some theoretical analysis of the personal, social, and cultural narratives that they have seen interrogated in theatre education. Cornelia Hoogland's research on how children engage with narratives of space and place in their drama combines innovative practice with careful analysis. The strength of the book lies in the careful description of practice, which is often accompanied by advocacy. The playwright and scholar Judith Thompson treads a delicate balance between advocacy and reflection on her own experiences of theatre, a process which opens questions about the educational benefits of drama.

At times, however, it is difficult to know who the intended audience is for this book. For those who are unfamiliar with debates in drama and theatre education, it offers an engaging introduction. However, for the reader who is unfamiliar with the Canadian theatre and education, a little more explanation of the writers' contexts would have offered a helpful frame for the chapters. The wide variety of voices within the book give it a richness, and in this disparate collection of essays and interviews there is plenty to persuade, challenge, and question the impact and significance of theatre pedagogy.

HELEN NICHOLSON

DOI: 10.1017/S0266464X04300187

*Rena Fraden*

**Imagining Medea: Rhodessa Jones and Theater for Incarcerated Women**

North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2001. 245 p. £31.50.

ISBN: 0-8078-4984-7.

This book is an excellent addition to the burgeoning field of prison theatre or 'arts in corrections'. Unlike other works in the field, Rena Fraden's book is research into and academic analysis of one particularly well-established initiative: she introduces the reader to the many dimensions of the Medea Project and the work of its founder and director, Rhodessa Jones. *Imagining Medea* gives a thorough account of the genesis of the project, a critique of the practice and rehearsal

process, a reflection on the place of the work in current discourses of criminal justice, and a final chapter that explores the spaces – real and imagined – that are created in the performances and prison-based workshops.

Most impressive are the breadth of perspectives and the diversity of voices that are heard through the book's narrative. Fraden is acutely aware of the methodological and ethical issues of the external writer creating a 'definitive' account of a project that is at its heart seeking to 'give a voice' to marginalized and unheard women. She is honest enough to admit that 'not everyone will be satisfied that I have positioned myself properly or caught the proper inflection'. However, her openness to this criticism and the engaging and fluent style of the book act to dissipate these concerns. This is a book that is, as the author says, 'another form of taking part', and it is in this positivist spirit that it deals with, comments on, and criticizes the extraordinary and complex world of the Medea Project.

Medea is a theatre project for incarcerated women in the San Francisco area that takes the additional step of going beyond the gates of the prisons to create public performances by groups of inmates. The complexity of these moments and the process leading up to them are explored here through different theoretical lenses: from the perspective of rehabilitation, from the perspective of hearing the voice of disadvantaged women, and from the perspective of the creation of new public spheres. Fraden weaves theoretical writings into her narrative expertly and in the process raises vital questions for anybody involved with the prison theatre. By exploring this work through the writings of Foucault for example, she properly notes that 'theatre too may operate as an institution for coercion, containing women, disciplining them'.

To what extent theatre transcends or counters these disciplinary forces is a repeated theme in the book – and one that is perhaps made more acutely problematic by the role of Rhodessa Jones herself. Her position as undisputed director and linchpin in the Medea Project heightens the concern about control and discipline. The project clearly gains much of its power from her energy and commitment, but this artist-led model (as opposed to the facilitator-led model that is more usual in similar initiatives in the UK) does create tensions. It provokes questions as to who can be the artist, who makes the final decisions, what happens to those who do not perform, and also

whether performances in the end are *for* inmates, *by* inmates, or *of* inmates.

These I believe are important questions to ask in establishing an ethics of prison theatre practice, and they are clearly debated and often deftly managed in this book. *Imagining Medea*, in bringing to the attention of practitioners, students, and academics an enduring example of prison arts practice, has made a strong and compelling contribution to the important process of questioning this innovative area of work.

JAMES THOMPSON

DOI: 10.1017/S0266464X04310183

*Dermot Rattigan*

**Theatre of Sound:**

**Radio and the Dramatic Imagination**

Ireland: Carysfort Press, 2002. 383 p. £12.80.

ISBN: 0-9534-2575-4.

The academic world is rapidly waking up to the idea of radio drama as a serious art form distinct from theatre – but it is still feeling its way towards matching a critical and analytical language. This remarkably thorough and often fascinating study takes several strides towards the development of such a language, and invites the reader to engage with radio drama with precision and imagination. The dearth of radio drama scripts that make it to print is highlighted by the fact that Rattigan chooses *King Lear* as his chief text for discussion in the latter part of the book. As universities look more seriously at radio drama, surely the time has come for an enterprising publisher to take up the challenge and recognize that not all the most innovative and important dramatic new writing is at the Royal Court or the Bush theatres in London, but may just as often be emerging from BBC Radio Three or Four.

However, the use of *King Lear* does permit the author to explore and identify the key differences between a theatre staging and an audio interpretation, and his use of four different productions from different decades and radio stations adds depth to his analysis. Rattigan is particularly strong in discussing the contributions of sound effects, music, and the technical elements to the overall vocabulary of radio drama. In order to create powerful and effective radio it is essential to 'think in sound', and in this volume, Rattigan encourages both the student and the practitioner to do exactly that.

PETER LESLIE WILD