World War I. The letters from this time communicate the frenetic pace and uncertainties of twentieth-century life, showing Stanislavsky's attempts to negotiate the tumultuous era as an individual, an artist, an arts administrator, and a father. Letters to Soviet leaders, including Josef Stalin, in the 1920s and 1930s testify to his struggles to support and defend his family and colleagues, to maintain the records of the theatre and his life's work, and to remain an essential artist.

This rich collection of letters, so carefully selected and translated by Laurence Senelick, is a bountiful contribution to the field of theatre studies. Senelick's efficient instructional notes, commentaries, explanations on translation choices, and introductions provide readers with easy access to the world in which Stanislavsky wrote his letters and developed his important writings on theatre. This remarkable edition will prove essential reading to theatre scholars and students both as a reference guide and comprehensive study.

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Bernard Shaw and Totalitarianism: Longing for Utopia. By Matthew Yde. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013; pp. x + 247. $90 cloth, $90 e-book.
doi:10.1017/S0040557415000666

Reviewed by Patricia Gaborik, *The American University of Rome*

With *Bernard Shaw and Totalitarianism: Longing for Utopia*, Matthew Yde provides an overdue look at the more perplexing aspects of Shaw's political thought. He makes a solid case for admitting Shaw to the club of utopian writers from which he is typically excluded and takes seriously the author's self-positioning as a revolutionary. But whereas the vast majority of scholars ignore or dismiss Shaw's support for the twentieth century's totalitarian regimes, Yde takes this seriously as well, insisting that we will do ourselves and the "iconoclast" playwright a "disservice" if we fail to recognize "the totalitarian side of his work and personality" (9). Thus, following in the footsteps of Kimberly Jannarone, whose important work *Artaud and His Doubles* (Michigan, 2010) sets out to explore what Susan Sontag called the "fascist longings in our midst," Yde tackles Shaw and what we think we know of his political thought.

Yde's premises are straightforward: it was Shaw's "deep need to believe" (145) in a coming utopia that led him to Fabian socialism and to support the Communist, Fascist, and Nazi dictatorships. His revulsion for waste, need for order, and disdain for the supposedly undisciplined proletarian masses caused him to identify with the Nietzschean supermen Stalin, Mussolini, and Hitler and to defend their right to eliminate undesirables from the body politic. Accordingly, Yde's analyses of two essays and eight plays focus on the themes of Creative Evolution and the Superman, eugenics, and how these were joined in Shaw's quest for utopia. Yde rightly asks: Why would Shaw talk so often about these issues if he did not care about or believe in them? The strength of Yde's study lies in this question, and his readings lend complexity (and seriousness) to Shaw's plays. But, more important, the many uncomfortable questions Yde asks—and Shaw's callous

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0040557415000666 Published online by Cambridge University Press

disregard for victims of political violence and The Holocaust—must indeed be reckoned with if we really want to know Bernard Shaw.

As detailed and finely teased out as Yde's readings are, his focus on these themes becomes repetitive, certainly in part because his strategy for responding to decades of avoidance is to bombard with examples. The redundancy, however, also points to a shortcoming of the study: the eye that fixes itself so critically on Shaw's plays averts its gaze from totalitarianism, which is presented and understood throughout the book in only superficial terms. Stalin's, Hitler's, and Mussolini's regimes become a generic axis of evil whose parts had "merely superficial" ideological differences but were united by their dictatorial structures and death camps (16). Although Yde notes that Shaw's political views are as important as his psychology, in the end his analysis is thoroughly grounded in Shaw's troubled psyche, as when he stresses that the writer's "unstructured, anarchical, and unhappy childhood" explained his "desire for an ordered and hierarchical political 'household'" (159). It may be that Shaw's sorrows led him to idealize the dictators and their methods; but, if this is the case, Yde weakens his own argument that Shaw was a "keen political observer" (166), political protagonist, or revolutionary, as Yde instead unveils a brilliant man who became a puppet to the unconscious mind. This conclusion, perhaps, does as much a disservice to Shaw and to our understanding of twentieth-century mass politics as ignoring the issue does.

Yde's attention to the aforementioned themes in Shaw's work is perfectly valid, as is the choice to do a psycholiterary study of a given playwright. And yet one cannot help but be disappointed that, even after *Bernard Shaw and Totalitarianism*, the research on Shaw's relationship with the dictators and their regimes has yet to be done, especially when the author stresses the need for "detailed historical contextualization" (203). In addition to Shaw's publications, Yde relies on English-language literary criticism, a curious choice given that, as he points out, most of that scholarship avoids the issues he takes up. But a historian's materials and approach, as well as a multilingual bibliography, would have brought more specific, *political* questions into the light. To take just Italy as an example, Yde discusses Shaw's well-known debate with socialist exile Gaetano Salvemini, but archival and other primary sources offer lesser and even unknown evidence to ponder: Shaw's relationship with Margherita Sarfatti, Il Duce's paramour; his frequenting of a Fascist official during his visits to Stresa; his flattering imitation of and commentary on Mussolini in an early sound film; his audience with the dictator; his ongoing correspondence with the theatrical censorship office; his refusal to be exempted from the Fascists' ban on British plays after the Ethiopia sanctions debacle; Mussolini's and other Fascists' enthusiastic response to his works. A generalized idea of an Italian Fascism that envisioned a new race of socially equal men and implemented death camps in order to bring it about is neither complete nor accurate enough to explain Shaw's support for Mussolini. Investigating the playwright's behavior in the above situations would have required exploring the reality of Fascist governance—and Shaw's responses to it—revealing Shaw as a political thinker and agent.

Stressing that Shaw was utopian to the end, Yde merely skirts the evolution of his thought over time, the ambivalence of his depiction of the dictators in his

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0040557415000666 Published online by Cambridge University Press

satire *Geneva*, his increasing tendency to identify as Communist over the years, and even his rethinking of dictatorship itself in the 1944 treatise *Everybody's Political What's What?* Yde privileges the unchanging psyche, sidelining the historical and political in deference to that psychological reading which—and on this I want to be clear—reveals much about Shaw but too little about the political systems he championed. Yde in fact closes his epilogue on Shaw and other Anglophone writers drawn to totalitarianism with a citation from Melville that highlights madness: a conventional move that lands *Bernard Shaw and Totalitarianism* in the realm of those studies that set aside twentieth-century dictatorships as inexplicable Others. With the aid of Bernard Shaw, perhaps we had the opportunity to learn something more.

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The Theatre of Tennessee Williams. By Brenda Murphy (with Bruce McConachie, John S. Bak, Felicia Hardison Londré, and Annette J. Saddik). Critical Companions. London and New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014; pp. x + 307. $90 cloth, $27.95 paper, $26.99 e-book.
doi:10.1017/S0040557415000678

Reviewed by Dirk Gindt, *Stockholm University*

The Theatre of Tennessee Williams forms part of the Bloomsbury Methuen Drama Critical Companions series and is divided into two main parts. The first, written by theatre historian Brenda Murphy, offers a detailed survey of Williams's oeuvre, spanning from his apprenticeship years up until the stage works he wrote shortly before his death in 1983. For the second part, Murphy commissioned four essays that present new insights into Williams's plays. Rather than focusing only on his canonical works, her objective is to contribute to "the project of seeing Tennessee Williams whole" (265) by charting his impact beyond his glory period on Broadway between 1945 and 1961.

Murphy convincingly contends that the playwright gradually channeled explicitly left-wing political aesthetics, equally influenced by naturalistic and expressionist drama, into a more "subjective realism" (16) that allowed him to explore fully the condition of the sensitive outsider in a materialist society. Early dramas from the late 1930s—like *Candles to the Sun*'s exploration of a coal miner's strike, *Not about Nightingales*' attack on the inhumane conditions of the penal system, and *Stairs to the Roof*'s depiction of the alienation felt by anonymous factory employees—illustrate Williams's ambition "to produce drama of political and social significance" (10).

How Williams fleshed out and varied his subjective realism is the theme of the following eight chapters, which shift their attention to the main corpus of his legacy, from *Battle of Angels* to *The Night of the Iguana*. A generous amount of citations of the playwright's notebooks and letters provides the necessary biographical context to understand his recurring concerns, fears, and obsessions. Among several highlighted stage productions is José Quintero's seminal 1952

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