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BOOK REVIEWS
EDITED BY EDWARD ZITER

The Past as Present in the Drama of August Wilson. By Harry J. Elam. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004; pp. xix + 231. $60 cloth.

Reviewed by Sandra G. Shannon, Howard University

Time, timing, and timelessness all converge in Harry J. Elam's *The Past as Present in the Drama of August Wilson* (2004), a major addition to Wilson studies at this profound juncture in the history of American theatre. First, Elam's study offers a sweeping retrospective of Wilson's blending of past and present time in his recently completed cycle of plays. Yet it is the timing of the book's release that affords it an added advantage. Though published in 2004, *The Past as Present in the Drama of August Wilson* can easily be regarded as a most fitting tribute to one of the great voices of the American stage. As the nation—indeed the world—mourns the sudden loss of August Wilson, current and future generations of scholars, students, educators, theatre practitioners, and lovers of theatre may find comfort in knowing that the foundation has already been laid for serious and sustained study of his phenomenal legacy and far-reaching influence. Elam's work adds a vital cornerstone to that foundation.

Elam is no newcomer to his subject. His years of following Wilson's career and publishing on his dramatic works place Elam at the forefront of Wilson scholarship. In 1987, Elam stuttered his way onto the stage of the Washington, D.C., Studio Theatre production of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* as Ma's speech-impeded nephew, Sylvester. That early acting role gave him an insider's perspective on August Wilson's craft, positioned him to meet the playwright, and jump-started a more than decade-long professional relationship between the two. Seventeen years following that introduction to Wilson, Elam now has authored numerous scholarly publications, given many papers and invited lectures, lead postshow discussions and graduate seminars, and advised several doctoral students on that prolific and much acclaimed Pulitzer Prize–winning dynamo of the American stage.

With much of the groundwork on Wilson already laid and with the closure that comes with the last installment in his ten-play cycle, the way is clear for Elam to examine the cycle as a finished product. A list of early book-length publications on August Wilson essentially answers basic questions, such as "Who is August Wilson?" "What is he up to?" and "Why is he important?" Sandra Shannon's *The Dramatic Vision of August Wilson* (1995), Kim Pereira's *August Wilson and the African American Odyssey* (1995), Peter Wolfe's *August Wilson* (1999), and Mary Bogumil's *Understanding August Wilson* (1999) provide useful examinations of Wilson's plays as individual units. While each study acknowledges the playwright's overall strategy, attention is, for the most part, focused on

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the internal workings of the plays. Joan Herrington's *I Ain't Sorry for Nothin' I Done: August Wilson's Process of Playwriting* (1998), as its title suggests, explores Wilson's fascinating process of revision, referencing his work on *Fences* as a case in point. There are also several collections of essays on Wilson, such as Alan Nadel's *May All Your Fences Have Gates: Essays on the Drama of August Wilson* (1994) and Marilyn Elkins's *August Wilson: A Casebook* (1994).

With the groundwork on Wilson studies laid by these works, later publications such as Elam's *Past as Present* could rightfully sidestep such queries and assume that the critically acclaimed and now world-renown work of August Wilson has penetrated the national consciousness and needs no further introduction. Studies such as Keith Clark's *Black Manhood in James Baldwin, Ernest J. Gaines, and August Wilson* (2002) and Margaret Booker's *Lillian Hellman and August Wilson: Dramatizing a New American Identity* (2003) concentrated instead on themes, aesthetic issues, and pedagogical practices, as well as on Wilson's relationship to other writers, and on the intersections between his politics and his art. However, Elam's book is the first to look back at Wilson's entire project and answer the question, "What does it all mean?"

With *Gem of the Ocean* and *Radio Golf*, Wilson completed, over the course of twenty years, his ambitiously promised—and delivered—ten-play cycle, an unparalleled project that now begs for a retrospective, holistic assessment. Of timely importance now is a treatment of the new meanings occasioned by the now completed cycle. Any such treatment will undoubtedly be driven by a set of inevitable questions: Did August Wilson achieve what he had so repeatedly and so publicly proclaimed and what he so methodically and passionately constructed? What new intertextual meanings emerge between and among his ten plays? And what gaps in this newly constructed narrative remain? Elam addresses each of those questions and is clear in drawing lines of the completion of distinction for his study:

> Rather than constructing the chapters around individual plays, I examine Wilson's self-reflexive intertextuality. His plays purposefully speak to each other; they develop a common agenda. Therefore, examining them in consort and dialogue with each other is crucial. By considering the intersections and continuities across the cycle, I intend this analysis not only to provide insight into the individual plays but, more significantly, to explore how the cycle as whole makes meaning and to theorize how Wilson (w)rights history. (xv)

Elam offers balanced and informed ideas on the informing aesthetics at work in Wilson's plays and probes issues that run the gamut from gender to racial politics. He gives credence to those ideas by grounding them in the theoretical discourse and scholarship generated by established scholars of African and African-American culture that include Robert Farris Thompson, Reginald McNight, bell hooks, Stanley Crouch, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Michelle Wallace, Cornel West, Margaret Wilkerson, Sandra Richards, Michael Awkward, and Robert O'Meally.

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Elam does not structure his study according to the timelines of Wilson's plays, but identifies several other organizing principles embedded within the cycle itself. According to Elam, those principles overlap, intersect, and bind together the plays in ways never before discernible. Music, madness, children, black men, black women, African spiritualism, and politics are much like the seemingly unrelated particles that find their way onto a Romare Bearden collage; yet, together the fragments capture the cultural essence of a people. For example, in Chapter 1, Elam demonstrates how music fluctuates between past and present time within and throughout Wilson's cycle: "Music has its own time, meter, rhythms, but the narrative of music in time also connects to concepts of memory and allows us to imagine and remember times" (29). In Chapter 2, he juxtaposes "racial madness" and childhood naïveté to suggest that "it is the characters who appear mentally or physically impaired, besieged by madness, unable to grasp the reality of the world around them, who represent a connection to a powerful, transgressive spirituality, to a lost African consciousness and to a legacy of black social activism" (58) and that "the children in Wilson's dramas function simultaneously to reveal the past, to shape the present, and also literally to represent the hopes and dreams of the future" (75). In Chapter 3, "The Woman Question," Elam addresses some lingering questions concerning the often criticized representations of women in Wilson's cycle. Here he engages issues about "their contradictory positions in relationship to men, their lack of voice and their insufficient character development" (91). To counter potential claims of a sexist agenda at work in Wilson's plays, Elam concludes that "communion of men and women is critical to Wilson's overall project of African American regeneration" (91).

In Chapter 4, "The Men of August," Elam explores the decidedly masculinist agenda promoted in Wilson's cycle, asserting that "the tensions between father and son that contribute to the anxieties of black masculinity must be addressed by confronting the past, finding room for forgiveness as well as resistance, remembering the 'father's story' in ways that allow one to hold on but also to let go" (145). Chapter 5, "Ogun in Pittsburgh: Resurrecting the Spirit," probes the concept of time as it relates to the African spiritual otherworldliness. Elam contends that Wilson "constructs a responsive African American spirituality that negotiates the living presence of the dead in African American experiences" (167) and concludes that "within the ritual action of his cycle, Wilson unearths African retentions that dwell beneath black American experience" (171). In the concluding Chapter 6, "The Rhetoric of Resistance by Way of Conclusion," Elam discusses several bones of contention with August Wilson's politics. Although Elam provides a veritable road map for understanding Wilson, he does not shy away from posing provocative questions when the playwright's politics appear to be at odds with his art. For example, Elam questions Wilson's wisdom in calling for a more openly defiant role for black playwrights. Elam considers the advice given to them in the now infamous "The Ground on Which I Stand" speech to be "overly prescriptive" and believes that "Wilson's TCG speech and his subsequent response to critic Robert Brustein provide a somewhat contradictory perspective" (218).

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Harry Elam's *The Past as Present in the Drama of August Wilson* is a timely and much-needed book. Space *must* be made for it in the personal library of anyone who teaches, produces, directs, reviews, lectures on, or publishes within any discipline of American theatre. Once in hand, time *must* be taken to absorb Elam's treatment of never-before referenced dimensions of Wilson's plays. With this illuminating and groundbreaking theoretical approach to Wilson's work, Elam has laid the groundwork for continued understanding and appreciation of the dramatic works of a gifted playwright and extraordinary artist.

Understanding Adrienne Kennedy. By Philip C. Kolin. Understanding Contemporary American Literature. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2005; pp. 222. $34.95 cloth.

Reviewed by James Fisher, Wabash College

Series books do not always make for the most scintillating study of a given topic; but Philip C. Kolin's *Understanding Adrienne Kennedy* enlivens the format of the University of South Carolina Press's series with an elegantly written study on the interrelationships of life, work, and performance in the dramatic accomplishment of a unique African-American woman playwright. Kennedy's dark, evocative dramas emphasize the search for identity in a culture that is at once familiar and alien, real and imagined. The books in this worthy series are geared toward students and nonacademic readers, and Kolin has skillfully managed to offer a deep reading and, at the same time, an accessible survey of Kennedy's diverse plays that, under any circumstances, would provide a heady challenge to any reader or viewer.

For a major dramatist who made her initial reputation in the mid-1960s, Kennedy has been paid surprisingly scant critical attention. Her plays have sporadically appeared in print over the years, but the first major collection of her work, *The Adrienne Kennedy Reader* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), was not published until 2001; and, aside from her engrossing memoir, *People Who Led to My Plays* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1996), one useful collection of essays, *Intersecting Boundaries: The Theatre of Adrienne Kennedy* (University of Minnesota Press, 1992), and a smattering of essays on her work in various journals or collections on African-American or feminist theatre, no full-length critical assessment has been available prior to this book. It is long overdue, but thanks to Kolin it has been worth the wait.

Kolin has written on a wide range of topics, emerging in the past two decades as a leading critical voice on major U.S. dramatists, particularly Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, and David Rabe, as well as a host of Southern writers and Shakespeare. Kolin's typically cogent merging of page and stage serves him well in exploring the key works of a playwright whose very style is an eloquent demonstration of the complex merger of text and performance.

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Kolin posits that the difficulty of fitting Kennedy into any previously articulated literary or dramatic niche may explain, in part, the slow pace of scholarship on her work. Profoundly influenced by African and Christian ritual, classical mythology, and the contentious American racial divide, Kennedy is a highly individual voice, distinct from her African-American contemporaries Amiri Baraka and Ed Bullins, as well as other black writers, both then and now. And, as Kennedy herself states (and as Kolin underscores), her work cannot be fully appreciated without a thorough understanding of her familial background, racial heritage, activist politics, and the history of psychoanalysis, as well as the cultural prejudices and constructions into which she was born—particularly the legacy of racially inspired violence and discord in American society. Examining those elements, Kolin provides an indispensable foundation for understanding Kennedy's work.

Kolin illuminates Kennedy's complex, varied, and emotionally potent dramas in the context of performance issues. His close reading of fifteen of Kennedy's full-length and one-act plays as both performance and literature provides welcome guidance through the characters, symbols, style, and language of her plays. Individual chapters are given over to groupings of short plays or devoted to single works, such as Kennedy's first Obie Award–winning play, *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964), and later plays ranging from *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* (1976) to *June and Jean in Concert* (1995). Kolin is most effective in explicating Kennedy's characters, most of whom are black or biracial women struggling to comprehend and embrace their identities within the context of an unwelcoming white-dominated culture. Buffeted by intricate social constructions and the seemingly insurmountable obstacles of race, gender, and politics, as well as the intricacies of splintered family life, those characters are adrift in a quest for fulfillment and a longing for a sense of self-worth. Kolin argues that Kennedy's traumatized heroines exhibit "a condition that psychiatrists have labeled a 'dissociative identity disorder,' or a 'disturbance in identity whereby two or more separate personalities or identities, known as alters, control an individual's behavior'" (20). Victimized in childhood by family or culture, those characters contend with "hallucinations, identity confusion and alteration, night terrors, flashbacks, and especially 'compulsions and rituals'" (20) that lead to a sense of hopelessness, plunging them into a claustrophobic nightmare that is a reflection of the torture chamber of a troubled mind. The title of Kennedy's first important play, *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, suggests such a place, a realm symbolized by alienation, fear, and insanity where personal dilemmas and the culture that has created them may be probed intensely.

As Kolin explains, the nightmarish, surrealistic vision of Kennedy's plays provides extraordinary staging challenges in creating a setting that must "simultaneously represent multiple, interconnected, and shifting locations" (21), allowing characters freedom of movement among those representations of a disturbing netherworld of strangely poetic symbols and verbal imagery. Kolin identifies intriguing connections with earlier dramatists, including Tennessee Williams (in the mode of his *Camino Real* or *Suddenly Last Summer*) and Federico García Lorca; but he stresses the greater significance of the fertile

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ground of 1960s Off-Broadway, arguing that the early "experimental" productions of Kennedy's plays were not only a necessary proving ground but also an essential influence on her evolution as a dramatist.

Understanding Adrienne Kennedy opens up the rich range of her work for future scholarly studies while providing students with a vividly conducted tour of Kennedy's most important plays and nonacademics and theatregoers with an essential guide for a deeper appreciation of her unique plays in performance.

Arthur Miller's America: Theatre & Culture in a Time of Change. Edited by Enoch Brater. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005; pp. 268. $55 cloth.

Reviewed by Jeffrey D. Mason, California State University, Sacramento

In the fall of 2000, to honor Arthur Miller's eighty-fifth birthday, the University of Michigan sponsored an international symposium on the playwright's work, and Enoch Brater has now edited a volume based on selected presentations from that event. In plain terms, the book includes Brater's chronicle of Miller's days at the university, playwright Frank Gagliano's thoughts on adapting *Timebends* for the stage, Toby Zinman's interview with actor Patrick Stewart on playing Lyman Felt in *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan*, Brater's interviews with composer William C. Bolcom on his opera version of *A View from the Bridge* and with Miller himself via satellite hookup, an afterword by critic Mel Gussow, and fourteen scholarly essays that form the body of the volume.

Several of the essays focus on specific plays. Patricia D. Denison refers to the 2000 National Theatre revival of *All My Sons* while arguing that the play shapes how the audience understands and interprets Joe Keller's decisions by introducing "convergent and divergent perspectives" derived from various sources of information, such as the realistically detailed setting and Larry's last letter to Ann (47). Austin E. Quigley demonstrates that *Death of a Salesman* and *After the Fall* complement each other with regard to their nonlinear use of time and consequent complication of causality, as well as their nonrepresentational scenic images. Andrew Sofer explores how in, *The Archbishop's Ceiling*, Miller pits "the causal dramaturgy of motive against what one might call the *prismatic* dramaturgy of power" through the theatre technology of the sooty, baroque ceiling that conceals the microphones (99). Laurence Goldstein interprets *The Misfits* in terms of the archetypal patterns he finds in film Westerns, connecting the themes in the screenplay with the process of the film industry itself. Peter W. Ferran explores the use of narrative mode in *The American Clock* before analyzing the ways in which the play does indeed evoke vaudeville. Toby Zinman compares the use of memory in *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan* and *Mr. Peters' Connections* to argue that, in those plays, Miller also borrows from vaudeville its fragmentary form and mixture of styles. Robert Scanlan offers a comparative

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survey of six of Miller's later plays: *Clara, I Can't Remember Anything, The Ride Down Mt. Morgan, The Last Yankee, Broken Glass*, and *Mr. Peters' Connections.*

Two essays treat teaching Miller's work in university classrooms. Bruce J. Mann, from Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, explores the "unseen presence," which he defines as "an inescapable force that hovers over the action and haunts his characters, who struggle with it" (36). He discusses Larry's death in *All My Sons*, the dead father's chair in *The Price*, the guard tower that looms over *After the Fall*, and the American dream in *Death of a Salesman;* and he explains how his students use such elements to explore character motivation and social operations. Elinor Fuchs, from the Yale School of Drama, offers a detailed account of her revision of a graduate course on dramatic theory that was repositioned in the curriculum to include not only dramaturgs but also directors and playwrights. She chose *Death of a Salesman* and assigned five dramaturgy students to lead weeklong sessions to study the play and perform selected scenes (often with interpolated material) in relation to feminist theory, materialist gender theory, race theory focused on the universalized Jewishness of the Brooklyn neighborhood, queer theory, and postcolonial theory.

Two other essays explore the uses of Miller's work. Ruby Cohn begins with the adaptation of *Death of a Salesman* for the 1983 Beijing production led by Miller and Ying Ruocheng, moves to the Wooster Group's attempt to use *The Crucible* in *L.S.D.*, and concludes with an account of a production of *The Archbishop's Ceiling* by George Coates Performance Works in San Francisco. Deborah R. Geis explores the "more direct appropriation" of *Death of a Salesman* "as intertext for a surprising number of new theatrical works," tracing the appropriation of characters as well as the quotation or parody of text to "enact critical rereadings of Miller's play" (203). She covers Rosalyn Drexler's *Room 17C* (1984), with Linda as the traveling salesperson; Paula Vogel's *The Oldest Profession* (1981), with Willy as an offstage character and prostitution providing a perspective on *Salesman*'s treatment of capitalism; and Donald Margulies's *The Loman Family Picnic* (1989).

The three remaining essays approach Miller's work thematically. Mike Sell analyzes how the plays confront the problems that American liberalism faced during the cold war, tracing the struggle of "individualism, universalism, [and] progressivism" to sustain viability in a changing political dynamic (24). He discusses morality in *All My Sons*, the playwright's search for value and "transcendent principles," his use of symbolic or mythic elements, and his concern for liberal individualism. Arnold Aronson suggests that Miller is "an artistic descendant of Chekhov" because his theatre is less realist and more symbolist, especially as revealed through the scenic images brought to life by such designers as Boris Aronson and Jo Mielziner. Jonathan Freedman traces Jewish-American masculinity from its early social expressions to Miller's own assimilation and his relationship with Marilyn Monroe as a landmark achievement for Jewish maleness.

Taken as a whole, the volume demonstrates the variety of Miller studies, and it takes a somewhat more theatrical perspective than is typical of scholarship

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on the playwright's work. Miller passed away just three weeks after this book's official publication date of 18 January 2005, so it is likely that *Arthur Miller's America* will mark a turning point. Miller's body of work is now truly finished, so scholars may begin to assess and understand the whole in the manner this collection suggests.

When Blanche Met Brando: The Scandalous Story of "A Streetcar Named Desire." By Sam Staggs. New York: St. Martins Press, 2005; pp. xviii + 384, 16 illus. $24.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Garrett Eisler, CUNY Graduate Center

Sam Staggs's *When Blanche Met Brando* may not be the most scholarly commentary on Tennessee Williams, but it is certainly informative. Aiming "to synthesize, as no previous writer has, the first-hand accounts of those who were there" (xii) for both the 1947 Broadway premiere of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and its 1951 film, as well as subsequent revivals, Staggs succeeds at revealing the gulf between myth and fact, between play and production. By illuminating its twisted path of accidents from genesis to premiere to "classic," Staggs reminds us that *Streetcar* by no means was destined to take on the form in which we now know it.

The book sets out from the beginning to illustrate how both Williams and his collaborators considered many options before their arrival at the now famous result. In a chapter tellingly entitled, "Blanche Collins and Her Brother-in-Law, Ralph Kowalski," for example, we see how fluid the identity of even the two major characters remained through much of the writing process, which included a mutually satisfying love scene. We then follow the frantic back-and-forth correspondence between Broadway producer Irene Selznick and Hollywood agents as she attempted to secure stars who now seem incongruous; how tempting it is to wonder what impact a Bette Davis–John Garfield *Streetcar*, for instance, might have had on the play's reception and success.

Staggs's research is thorough—some of it from previously published materials but much of it original from interviews and archives—and his greatest service is in fleshing out components of the early production history usually overshadowed by the legends of Marlon Brando, Vivien Leigh, and Elia Kazan (though much is said about them as well). Whole chapters are devoted to profiling members of the impressive original supporting cast and crew, such as Edna Thomas (who had starred in Orson Welles's Federal Theatre Project *Macbeth*) and costumer Lucinda Ballard, responsible for so much of what we now consider "the Brando look." Staggs also gives due attention to Jessica Tandy's originating performance of Blanche, subsequently eclipsed by Leigh's immortality on film. Assembling a panorama of records (rare television and radio excerpts, comparisons to contemporaneous film work of Tandy's, as well as remembrances

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of costars and other eyewitnesses), Staggs achieves an admirable reconstruction of a milestone performance, making a real contribution to *Streetcar* production scholarship. Likewise, nowhere has Laurence Olivier's 1949 London staging (in which Leigh made her debut as Blanche) been so thoroughly recounted. A much-needed attention to detail is also provided of the studio censorship of Kazan's film, in which Staggs lists every minute difference between its original release version and the uncensored "restoration" of 1993.

In the book's last section, Staggs traces the various incarnations of the play over half a century, including national tours, international interpretations, pop-culture parodies, an American Sign Language staging, and André Previn's recent operatic adaptation. It is as close to a complete production history as can be easily found in print. Often, this mass-market book does end up packaging such valuable data in user-friendly layout gimmicks like "sidebar" boxes or under such glib chapter headings as "I'll Take 'Actresses Who Have Played Blanche Dubois' for a Thousand, Alex." Even that mock game-show format, though, still yields a satisfying mix of gossip and substantive remarks on intriguing "lost" performances by Uta Hagen, Arletty, Claire Bloom, and Tallulah Bankhead, all the way up to Glenn Close's recent star turn in London, and even some intriguing "might have beens" like the African-American actress Ellen Holly, who was denied permission by the playwright for a proposed 1970s all-black production of the play. (Photos help bring to life some of those Blanche "variations.")

Staggs comes across not as an objective recorder of this history but as a highly opinionated fan. Impassioned likes (Leigh, for instance) and dislikes (Tandy) substitute for reasoned arguments. But while that quality—along with his chatty first-person voice and personal reflections on his own life experiences with the play—may turn off some academics, the book remains a reliable resource for anyone studying or performing Williams's masterwork. (The bibliography alone is a helpful guide to materials on popular midcentury theatre and film, including some lesser-known actors' memoirs.) By asking us to imagine so many "alternative" *Streetcar*s, in the end, Staggs enables us to appreciate the Kazan–Brando collaboration as unique and not a "standard," detaching the play from that at-times stifling legacy.

Ethnic Drag: Performing Race, Nation, Sexuality in West Germany. By Katrin Sieg. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005; pp. 286. $65 cloth.

Reviewed by Shannon Steen, University of California, Berkeley

Here's a familiar story: a white director produces a play with black and Middle Eastern characters. Director decides to cast white actors in those roles, controversy ensues. To American readers of *Ethnic Drag*, this controversy will seem so routine as to be nearly unremarkable. What makes *this* rendition of the story interesting is that it takes place not in the United States, but in Germany.

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In *Ethnic Drag*, Katrin Sieg examines the ways in which race has become displaced from the German political landscape onto the stage through the figure of "ethnicity." She identifies ethnic drag in the German context as the substitution of an "ethnic" signifier like Arab or Native American for a historically "raced" one like Jewishness, and cannily argues that as such, "ethnicity" became a trope through which to displace and disavow the operation of racial formation in a country "whose history embodies racism's worst excesses" (2). "Ethnic drag," she argues, functions as the abstracted performance of race in Germany, the means by which Germans work out the cultural systems of race without ever naming it as such. Moreover, she adds, it allows postwar Germans "to align themselves with the victims and avengers of genocide rather than its perpetrators and accomplices" (13).

Sieg examines a range of performances that embody the abstraction of German racial systems. Throughout the book, she focuses on the three-cornered figure of ethnic drag on the German stage: the noble Jew, the tragic Oriental (usually a Turkish figure), and the "lost" native American Indian. She begins her study with a "pre-history" of Jewish impersonation, starting with the casting traditions of Lessing's 1779 play *Nathan the Wise*, which, according to Sieg, illustrates the "vicissitudes of German–Jewish relations over the past two centuries" (31). She excavates the history of Lessing's play both to trace how it embodies the theoretical problems around ethnic impersonation, and also to illuminate how the act of Jewish impersonation prompted a range of responses from pro- and antifascist cultural figures alike. *Nathan* and other forms of Jewish impersonation conditioned the German spectator to act as a kind of racial detective, as the canny observer who could discern the Jew's attempt to "pass" in German culture at large. She moves on to examine how other forms of ethnic impersonation—the Wild West shows of the 1950s, Indian impersonation—reassured Germans as to their own innocence of the horrors of the Holocaust at the same time that they allowed them to mourn it. From here, Sieg unearths the antifascist theatre of the 1960s and the conscious development of theatrical conventions from the docudrama forms of the sixties to those that comment directly on the systems of race in Germany that had been at work in the previous performances she analyzes. Those later performances frequently center on the figure of the foreign guest worker, and form what Sieg terms a "counteranthropology"; they reverse the systems of spectatorship set up in the Jewish impersonation plays and train their audiences instead to read the narratives of ethnic stage conventions as illusory and ideologically laden. Sieg concludes the volume with one chapter on the explicit deployment of queer readings of colonialism in performance, with its conflicted scene of interracial desire, and another on performances authored by those groups who had been the previous object of impersonation.

Although Sieg is clearly indebted here to theories of drag and gender masquerade that animated queer theory in the 1980s and early 1990s (not the least of which is Sue-Ellen Case's naming of premodern gender impersonations as drag), she alters the weight of that mode of analysis. She emphasizes that drag performances have naturalized the social order as well as posed a challenge to

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ontological assumptions around its categories (as Judith Butler has argued with great influence), and highlights the ways in which ethnic drag in Germany has operated primarily as a technology of the former. If anything, she suggests, notions of the possibility for parodic mimicry in drag has enabled the pernicious survival of racist performance. In the anecdote about the white director with which she opens the book, she points out how the director co-opted precisely that argument—cased in Brechtian arguments around alienation techniques—in order to justify his casting choices.

Caveat lector: if you are an American reader of Sieg's book, check your understanding of race at the door. While the German case histories Sieg traces echo famous U.S. controversies like those surrounding *Miss Saigon* and the history of blackface, they operate within a very different history regarding how racial categories are created, maintained, and disrupted. Unfortunately, Sieg never directly addresses the different relationships between race and ethnicity in different national contexts, with the result that she sometimes becomes ensnared in the complicated lines of argumentation regarding race/ethnicity/impersonation. To a great extent, Sieg's difficulty here is in no small part due to her reliance on American race theory and the now extensive research on racial impersonation by U.S. scholars. She is clearly aware of those distinctions, but she leaves them largely implied, and as an American reader, I did wish for a clearer historical untangling of those categories. What did "race" mean in prewar Germany, and how was that term deployed there? How does the absence of histories of slavery or the fact that immigration in Germany was largely understood as a *post*war phenomenon (as opposed to the origin of such a nation as the United States) affect the ways in which race was understood in that context? What might "race" and "ethnicity" look like in a country devoid of melting-pot fantasies or the explicit legal struggles over civil rights? To be fair to Sieg, such questions are in some ways beyond the scope of her quite excellent study. But, given her theoretical reliance on conceptual strategies developed in U.S. contexts, an at least cursory discussion of the differences would have been helpful. That aside, this is a fascinating volume, and it considerably broadens the history of the German stage and the growing literature on theatrical- or performance-inflected studies of racial dynamics. It is not to be missed.

Post-Imperial Brecht: Politics and Performance, East and South. By Loren Kruger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; pp. xiv + 399. $85 cloth.

Reviewed by Catherine M. Cole, University of California, Santa Barbara

Loren Kruger's *Post-Imperial Brecht: Politics and Performance, East and South* is an impressive transnational study of Brechtian theatre that is notable for its simultaneous breadth and depth. Kruger takes us far beyond nationalist frameworks, which have long dominated theatre studies. She also avoids the

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common pitfalls of "global" and comparative studies: sweeping generalizations that flatten historical specificity are not to be found in this book's 400 richly footnoted pages. *Post-Imperial Brecht* provides a precise and detailed study of the transnational flow of Brecht's ideas and plays between West and East Germany, and between Germany and South Africa, from the 1930s to the present.

Kruger begins with Brecht's *Measures Taken* (1938), then follows the author's move to East Germany and his response to an "actually socialist" state. She then covers productions by Brecht's successor, Heiner Müller, as well as the ironies of the commodification and reverence that marked the 1998 centenary of Brecht's birth. A merchandizing frenzy of postcards, T-shirts, compact discs, and board games leads Kruger to speculate about the future of Brecht when his communism has become a "novelty item in an increasingly competitive theatrical marketplace" (174). Whereas the first half of the book illuminates an East–West flow of ideas, the second takes readers along a North–South axis. Kruger sees a bidirectional flow of culture: a discussion of Brecht's influence on and affinities with antiapartheid political theatre in South Africa is followed by a chapter illuminating the impact on East Germany of South African playwright Athol Fugard. Postcolonial scholars will appreciate this reciprocity of influence: Africa is not typically represented as an active agent in cultural exchange with Europe. The final chapter moves southward once again, and beyond the bounds of conventional theatre. Kruger analyzes South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) for its embodiment of both the potential and the limits of an Enlightenment theatre project, Brechtian or otherwise.

Such ambitious movement between countries and continents is not without precedent in theatre studies: Joseph Roach's treatment of the "circum-Atlantic" sets a high-water mark in this regard. However, Kruger's book is a transnational study of a different sort, anchored in the oeuvre of a single author, Bertolt Brecht. Kruger has a masterful command of multiple languages and national histories. Combined with her exhaustive research and indefatigable thoroughness, that mastery makes *Post-Imperial Brecht* a treasure trove for anyone interested in Brecht, East Germany, and South Africa. That said, it is difficult to imagine the ideal reader who can fully appreciate the entire scope of the book. Each chapter is pitched to the expert and assumes substantial background knowledge. Unfortunately, few readers will be as adept in Brecht, Germany, and South Africa as the text presumes.

Given my own interests, I devoured the South African chapters, and was rewarded with fresh insights into canonical works and unexpected treatment of lesser-known sources. I especially appreciated Kruger's reappraisal of the work of the Junction Avenue Theatre Company (JATC), which provided, even under apartheid, critical representations of competing South African pasts rather than a single unified voice or protest (257). Kruger's reappraisal of that company is quite prescient: JATC's heterogeneous approach seems to be key to envisioning theatre in a postapartheid state: its founding director, Malcolm Purkey, was just appointed the new artistic director of the Market Theatre. Probably as a reflection of my own biases, it was only in the South African

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section of the book that I found any significant error of fact: Kruger asserts that a performance of contrition by violators of human rights at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission bound the Committee on Amnesty to grant it (360). Yet in actuality, remorse was expressly *not* required as a criterion for amnesty in the TRC process.

A work of this breadth begs the question: does it cohere? Its key structuring argument is that Brecht's full impact as a dramatist, director, and theorist can be realized only through a "post-imperial" framework that encompasses an East–West axis as well as a North–South one. Kruger's intervention is provocative and important, as much for what it says about the potential of transnational research design as for what it reveals about Bertolt Brecht. The most appropriate test of this book's value may not be its coherence but, rather, its productive challenge to scholars, who tend to be far more bound by divisions of nation and language. As *Post-Imperial Brecht* makes clear, artists move fluidly between cultures, nations, and continents. One hopes that theatre scholars will follow such movements with curiosity and intellectual integrity. Loren Kruger has given us a viable and impressive model for such transnational research.

African Drama and Performance. Edited by John Conteh-Morgan and Tejumola Olaniyan. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2004; pp. 274. $49.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Awam Amkpa, New York University

The anthology *African Drama and Performance*, edited by John Conteh-Morgan and Tejumola Olaniyan, brings together a body of critical essays on the corporeal and discursive aspects of African drama and theatre remarkable for its encyclopedic scope and intellectual rigor. The work, stewarded by two of the most erudite and industrious scholars in the field, is a book-length version of a highly successful special edition of *Research in African Literature.*

The editors undertake to demonstrate "theatre's vitality in Africa and its importance, both in the colonial and postcolonial periods, as a site of cultural self-definition, political and social critique, and resistance, among other roles" (1). They seek to broaden the scope of their project to include nonliterary performance traditions—a category usually underestimated in studies of Africa's theatre history and theory. While not neglecting the dynamics of literary drama among those capable of producing, reading, and watching it in European languages, the editors of the present volume make a serious effort to contextualize nonliterary traditions and to explore the role of the modern media in reshaping indigenous performance traditions.

The essays, grouped into five parts, span the immense range of Africa's cultural and historical terrain, and include close readings of plays by prominent dramatists. Part 1, entitled "General Contexts," begins with Wole Soyinka's

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"King Baabu and the African Renaissance"—a paper that he delivered on the occasion of the performance of his play *King Baabu.* The rebirth that Soyinka envisions would challenge the authoritarianism of neocolonial African regimes and usher in civic societies imbued with democratic humanism. In that context, symbolic cultural practices serve as the vehicle for letting "the trampled will of the people triumph and survive beyond cant, rhetoric, cynicism, and murderous opportunism" (23). There follows a well-documented piece by the renowned German dramaturg Joachim Fiebach on the discursive role of performances in fueling social and political activism in predominantly oral societies. Johannes Fabian, in "Theatre and Anthropology, Theatricality and Culture" demonstrates the truth of Fiebach's argument about the transformative power of symbolic acts by recounting his own fieldwork and familial experiences. For Fabian, "assuming theatre as a source of inter-cultural knowledge involves recognition, not only of performative next to informative knowledge, but also of anarchic versus hierarchic conceptions of knowledge" (43). Ato Quayson's "Pre-Texts and Intermedia: African Theatre and the Question of History" concludes this part of the book by posing the question: "how do we attempt to place theatre within a total interpretation of aesthetic and pragmatic expression on the continent while at the same time attempting to generate tools of analysis that are specific to it?" (46). His answer lies in highlighting the syncretic nature of African performance and of African theatre's tendency to employ diverse genres and materials without creating hierarchies of theatrical elements.

The essays in Part 2 focus on intercultural translations by dramatists who have adapted plays belonging to one culture in order to address the same or tangential issues in other cultural contexts. Isidore Okpewho's "Soyinka, Euripides, and the Anxiety of Empire" sets the stage by showing that Soyinka's adaptation of Euripides' play *The Bacchae* offered an insurgent reading of neocolonial Africa's malaise, and promoted an aesthetic theory with which to produce work in societies plagued by social inequities. Okpewho's essay is part of a larger book—*Contesting Empire: Black Writers and the Western Canon*—the publication of which will no doubt make a significant contribution to the continental and diasporic studies of African literature. Part 2 includes John Conteh-Morgan's "Antigone in the 'Land of the Incorruptible': Sylvain Bemba's *Noces posthumes de Santigone* (*Black Wedding Candles for Blessed Antigone*)," an analysis of the Congolese novelist and playwright's adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone* that draws attention to the Francophone Bemba's use of myth and history to give political events in Africa universal import.

Soyinka's and Bemba's adaptations of European texts translate Africa's unique ways of seeing in which the religious and secular, the spiritual and material, and the emotional and rational are parts of multifaceted ways of knowing and of tackling social reality. In a similar vein, Ivorian Marie-José Hourantier emphasizes the role of the occult in molding African epistemologies in her account of her company Bin-Kadi's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth.* Her essay masterfully unveils the textual moments embodied by gestures and other covert signifiers embedded in occult modes of divination common to

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African communities. Sandra L. Richards pursues the theme of cultural translations by exploring the transfiguration of Yoruba gods in the New World dramaturgy of the African-American playwright August Wilson.

Part 3 comprises three outstanding essays under the label "Radical Politics and Aesthetics." Tejumola Olaniyan's impeccably written "Femi Osofisan: The Form of Uncommon Sense" underscores the contradictions plaguing politically radical playwrights whose works thematically address the poor but that are also largely written and imagined in formal languages usually inaccessible to the very constituency they seek to target. Fortunately, that irony was less of a problem for the radical Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o, whose revolutionary dramaturgy forms the subject of Nicholas Brown's essay, "Revolution and Recidivism: The Problem of Kenyan History in the Plays of Ngugi wa Thiong'o." Through a closer reading of Ngugi's texts—pitched to a specific political group, namely disenfranchised Kenyans—Brown unearths extratextual materials usually glossed over in other analyses of Ngugi's works. Dominic Thomas completes the section by looking at the works and political activism of the maverick author Sony Labou Tansi, who railed against the elite class of his own lineage.

Parts 4 and 5 depart from close textual readings and explications of context to examine the multimedia manifestations of performance traditions. Loren Kruger's "Theatre for Development and TV Nation: Notes on Educational Soap Opera in South Africa" points out the irony of the South African state's enlistment of corporate entities like British Petroleum in its project to fashion a dramaturgy of postapartheid, multicultural nationalism. Bob W. White discusses "'Dipping' and 'Throwing" in Congolese Popular Dance Music." Karin Barber expounds on the challenges of translating the oral traditions of Yoruba popular theatre into virtual scripts for Nigerian television, while Akin Adesokan examines the impact of video productions of drama on the aesthetic considerations of performance. Three essays on South Africa (Catherine Cole), Ghana (Daniel Avorgbedor), and Central Africa (Pius Ngandu Nkashama) in the anthology's final group of essays explore the socially discursive dimensions of performance under the title "The Social as Drama."

This anthology will stand as a classic compendium of works on drama and performance from Africa.

Performing Medieval Narrative. Edited by Evelyn Birge Vitz, Nancy Freeman Regalado, and Marilyn Lawrence. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005; pp. xvi + 261, 8 illus. $80 cloth.

Reviewed by Elina Gertsman, Southern Illinois University

The subject of medieval performance has recently come under the scrutiny of scholars from several disciplines—history, art history, religious studies,

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anthropology, and literature, to name but a few. In the process, "performance" has come to be used rather loosely to signify a number of different concepts. Evelyn Birge Vitz, Nancy Freeman Regalado, and Marilyn Lawrence—the editors of *Performing Medieval Narrative*—attend to a particular aspect of performance that they define as the confluence of four essential characteristics: the presence of a performer; the action of telling or enacting; a story being told or enacted; and, finally, and most important for the book, the presence of an audience. The volume is broken into four parts, each addressing different aspects of the performance traditions that form an integral part of medieval narratives.

Part I focuses on the art of performance itself. The first two articles examine that art as seen through the lens of audience response. In "'He Was the Best Teller of Tales in the World': Performing Medieval Welsh Narrative," Sioned Davies focuses on the positive responses elicited from viewers/listeners in reaction to particularly good performances. Davies's ultimate emphasis on the role of the audience (and its paramount importance for the success of a medieval performance) receives a different twist in Joyce Coleman's essay, which explores responses to a performance from a man who is a performer himself. Her "Complaint of the Makers: *Wynnere and Wastoure* and the 'Misperformance Topos' in Medieval England" investigates the grumbles of a poet who criticizes his youthful colleagues. This fascinating case study reveals performers' anxieties that their professional status was jeopardized by young newcomers with lower performing standards. The final essay in the section, John Ahern's "Dioneo's Repertory," approaches the subject of medieval performances from a different angle, and, by focusing on Boccaccio's Dioneo, examines the medieval performers' art proper as informed by both oral and textual traditions.

The second part of the volume, which focuses on performative readings of texts, is, perhaps, the most successful and cohesive in the book. Keith Busby's captivating study, "*Mise en texte* as Indicator of Oral Performance in Old French Verse Narrative," sensitively attends to the very layout of the text and its role in the oral performance of texts. In "Erotic Reading in the Middle Ages: Performance and Re-performance of Romance," Evelyn Birge Vitz analyzes a kind of triple performance of eroticism inscribed into medieval romances: the reading of an erotic scene by characters of the romances, their re-enactment of that scene, and the physical performance (and, perhaps, imitation) of the scene itself by the reader of the text. The following two case studies shift the focus of the section: Marilyn Lawrence's "Oral Performance of Written Narrative in the Medieval French Romance *Ysaÿe le Triste*" explores the image of a female performer as revealed in that romance, while Nancy Freeman Regalado's "Performing Romance" turns to staged banquet and joust interludes based on Arthurian romances and documented in Sarrasin's *Le roman du Hem.*

If the first half of the book deals with explicit performances, Part III turns to the implicit indications of performances in a variety of genres. The first two essays focus on sermons: Brian J. Levy's "Performing Fabliaux" explores comic narratives—mostly those inscribed within homiletic literature—and discusses the makings of a performance within those texts; whereas Adrian P. Tudor mines

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collections of miracles and pious stories for indications of performative elements in "Preaching, Storytelling, and the Performance of Short Pious Narratives." In "Reading, Reciting, and Performing the *Renart*," Kenneth Varty discusses elements of performances that mark the *Roman de Renart*. The section concludes with Karl Reichl's "Turkic Bard and Medieval Entertainer," which sets out to prove the performability of medieval epic literature by comparing it to the contemporary performances of traditional Turkic epics. The essay is a fitting transition into the fourth and final part of the book, which consists of essays by present-day performers who bring the art of medieval narratives, whether sung or spoken, to their contemporary audiences: Benjamin Bagby discusses his own performances of Eddic songs, Linda Marie Zaerr analyzes improvisatory structures of *The Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell* that she herself has repeatedly performed, and Anne Azéma recounts her performances of narrative texts that need not rely on music or intricate staging.

With an extensive bibliography and a detailed index, *Performing Medieval Narrative* undoubtedly makes an important contribution to the field of literary study. Although some essays fit into the overall scheme of the book better than others, the volume, on the whole, is an invaluable exploration of the multifaceted world of medieval performance. The authors set two main goals: to introduce a wide range of materials by engaging a variety of scholars from different subfields in medieval studies, and to provide a model for further inquiries into the field of medieval narrative performance. Both goals are admirably fulfilled.

The Idea of the Theater in Latin Christian Thought: Augustine to the Fourteenth Century. By Donnalee Dox. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2004; pp. 196. $65 cloth.

Reviewed by Edmund P. Cueva, Xavier University

This is an unusual but good and sensible book. I write that it is unusual because *The Idea of the Theater in Latin Christian Thought* does not follow the predictable pattern of looking at the "materiality of medieval theater practices and historiography" (2). It instead looks at theatre as it appears in medieval thought and as "moments in European intellectual history" (4). Dox leads the reader through a thorough and erudite survey of the writings of some of the Latin Christian authors. She begins with Saint Augustine of Hippo and ends with Bartholomew of Bruges. The text has three major goals. First, the author examines what different postclassical, Christian authors knew about or thought of Greco-Roman theatre as a function of written discourse. The second goal is to keep the discussion of the late-antique and medieval understanding of ancient classical theatre in the intellectual contexts in which the texts were used. Lastly, Latin Christian views on classical theatre are examined in detail. The conclusion of

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this analysis demonstrates that the idea of "truth" as different from "falsehood" in the writings by the Latin Christian authors was the focus of their texts, rather than any actual interest in classical tragedy and comedy as genres in their own right.

Dox first examines Saint Augustine's mostly pejorative views on theatre as found in *The City of God, Confessions, Concerning the Teacher*, and *On Christian Doctrine.* Augustine ardently condemns theatre as a "debauched social activity rooted in Roman polytheism" (11). This ancient genre encouraged, among many other things, solipsism, lust, and the adoration of actors. Most important, theatre got in the way of acquiring true knowledge about God, since ancient classical theatre was founded to worship pagan gods from a "cancerous pantheon" (19). This view of Augustine was quite influential, as we see in Isidore of Seville, who considered ancient classical theatre an artifact, a part of a bygone culture, and a relic that at one time did serve as entertainment. Nevertheless, ancient theatre is still for Isidore a sexually and demonically polluted place and therefore should be kept separate from the Christian world.

By and large, Greco-Roman theatre and Christianity appear irreconcilable in Rabanus Maurus's *De universo* and Remigius of Auxerre's *Commentum in Boethii*. The former sought in the classical texts "latent Christian symbolism and meaning in the broader effort to promote Christian faith over the beliefs of barbarian paganism" (45), but, at the same time, constructed the metaphor of the classical theatrical agon as representing the Christian's struggle to reach heaven. The latter agreed with Isidore's opinion of the theatre as a place of "false representation" that should be avoided. Remigius, however, candidly related the plots of Greek tragedies to the story of Christ. It should be noted that Dox also spends time on the quasi-heretical contribution that Amalarius of Metz, the author of the *Liber officialis*, made to the history of theatre in Christian thought when he implied that the "Mass was like theater" (55).

In the twelfth century, the pejorative Christian view of theatre began to change once both the "aura of paganism" (73) dissipated and thinkers started to ponder the possibility that spirituality might unfold from humans and their creations. At the same time, the idea of theatre began to enter Christian comprehension as "an institutionalized practice" (78). For example, Honorius Augustodunensis theorized that human inventions could be the nexus of "the natural world, the spiritual world, and the material world of human experience" (81) without treading on heretical theological ground. Hugh of St. Victor's *Didascalicon* even went so far as to say that skill in the arts could "lead to knowledge of the divine" (85). John of Salisbury, the author of the *Policraticus*, swerves slightly from this trend by criticizing contemporary court and papal entertainment, and thus circuitously disparaging classical theatre.

The thirteenth-century translations of Aristotle's *Poetics* did not greatly influence the concept of theatre of the thinkers of that century or the next. Why this is the case is open to debate. A possible answer may lie in the *Poetics's* "medieval classification as a treatise on logic" (102), which precluded the work from being included in reflections on the Greco-Roman theatre.

The Idea of the Theater in Latin Christian Thought is a solid book, full of keen observations and creative approaches to texts that have been often revisited.

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This volume is a pleasant surprise that lends expert guidance into junctures of theatre and theology previously not crossed. I recommend it to anyone interested in classical theatre.

Le mémoire de Mahelot: Mémoire pour la décoration des pièces qui se représentent par les Comédiens du Roi. Édition critique établie et commentée par Pierre Pasquier. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005; pp. 377, illus. €70 cloth.

Reviewed by David G. Muller, École des Hautes Études Commerciales

The previously available edition of this important source of evidence that documents scenic practice in the public theatres of seventeenth-century France was prepared by Henry Carrington Lancaster in 1920 as *Le Mémoire de Mahelot, Laurent et d'autres décorateurs de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne et de la Comédie Française au XVIIe siècle.* If only for supplanting Lancaster's with one that will be more widely available for purchase and consultation, Pierre Pasquier's new critical edition would be an excellent resource for theatre scholarship, continuing the transmission of documentary evidence and disciplinary knowledge to future generations. However, in the eighty-six years since Lancaster's edition, the discoveries, methods, and aims of theatre scholarship have changed dramatically, and Pasquier's significant introduction, which encompasses more pages than the presentation of the *Mémoire* itself, is also an excellent contextual synthesis of historical work that relies on this vital manuscript (BNF, ms. 24330).

The manuscript may forever be known, following Lancaster, as *Le Mémoire de Mahelot*, but its precise title (if a "title" is indeed appropriate for a document of its kind) will always be a matter of interpretation, suspended between textual fidelity and the need for a descriptiveness that takes into account its documentary history. Textually, there are two choices: *"memoire / de plusieurs decorations / qui Serve aux piece / contenus en ce present / Livre Commence par laurent / Mahelot Et Continue par / Michel Laurent En lannee / 1673*" (fol. 2r), which dates from the document's later use, or "Memoire Pour la decoration / des Pieces qui Se Representent / Par les Comédiens du Roy / Entretenus de Sa Majeste" (fol. 9v), which Pasquier has chosen to shorten as the new edition's subtitle. Whatever its title, the new edition is exemplary in its comprehensive description of the manuscript's physical properties, composition, pagination, and front matter, as well as its detailed analyses of the document's functions, multiple hands, dating, and textual development, each of which proves necessary to a full understanding of the value of the manuscript. After all, it is a very complex, eclectic document, directly used by theatre professionals for both production and archival purposes during two distinct and important phases of theatrical development in Paris. For most nonspecialists, its value still lies in its trove of forty-seven *croquis scénographiques*, or scenic sketches,

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dating from the earlier period (the 1630s); but as a working instrument in the life of a public theatre, the entire document is as valuable to theatre historians for its collection of *notices techniques*, or technical descriptions, which only sometimes accompany the sketches.

In contrast to Lancaster, Pasquier presents the *Mémoire* in an "original spelling" edition. The choice of retaining orthography, punctuation, and most capitalization is certainly appropriate because the document can also serve as valuable evidence for seventeenth-century writing in a professional and technical context. Thus, the compilers of the *Mémoire* never use elision, seldom accent vowels, and hardly punctuate the text of the *notices* except for instances that seem to suggest a technical rather than syntactic purpose. While the original text is quite readable on its own, it is well served by the minimal silent correction that Pasquier's edition provides, such as capitalization at the beginning of each *notice* and for play titles.

Much more significantly, Pasquier's introduction serves as an excellent survey of seventeenth-century French scenic practice. Synthesizing an extensive bibliography, he meticulously addresses such topics as the location and construction of the Hôtel de Bourgogne and the history of its Troupe, as well as the conception, construction, disposition, and changing of scenery in the public theatres. His discussion relies on the evidence of the *Mémoire* itself, but also on didascalic and iconographic evidence from many seventeenth-century playtexts, as well as seventeenth-century dramatic theory, to describe the functioning of the *chambres ouvrantes*, the interplay of interior and exterior locales, the challenges of sightlines within the architecture of the public playhouse, stage entrances and exits, and the uses of lighting, curtains, and properties.

Pasquier's work reminds us of the need for synthesis and periodic reexamination of received notions as well as of the fertility of continued interest in the sources of our knowledge. In his discussion of how scenic locale was perceived in conjunction with the performance of actors, for example, he parts company with the "critical conformity" sustained by Eugène Pierre Marie Rigal (1889), Pierre Martino (1927), and S. W. Deierkauf-Holsboer (1960). Indeed, he makes a lengthy and convincing case for the playing of scenes *within* the *chambres ouvrantes*, rejecting the widely disseminated notion that actors in the 1630s always moved to a neutral *avant-scène* after having somehow used one of the multiple scenic *compartiments* in order to establish locale. Always mindful of the lack of full and complete evidence for settling such issues, Pasquier frequently employs a conservative evidentiary approach, and that conservative attitude serves his engaging discussion. Many questions are raised in the course of reading his introduction, and they are addressed rigorously: How is the concept of simultaneous decor nuanced by the opening and closing of *chambres* and the masking of one scenic element by another? How was medieval scenographic practice absorbed into the public's *habitus*, and how did that absorption serve to influence the reception of scenery in the early seventeenth century? What is the relationship between the Serlian comic stage and the scenography for Corneille's comedy?

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This is traditional, "positivist" (if you will) theatre history at its most gratifying, describing the mechanics of theatrical production in an interestingly detailed and evidenced manner so as to formulate a disciplinary reconstruction of past stage practice. Still, it is very careful not to rely on an all-encompassing master narrative for the development of seventeenth-century scenography, providing a much more satisfying engagement with the evidence for plurality and complexity during the period, even as it takes a generic approach to the development of unified and successive decor. Through its synthesis of scholarship on seventeenth-century French scenographic practice, Pasquier's edition of the *Mémoire de Mahelot* goes a long way toward reminding us that there is much to learn (and unlearn) from the sources we think we already know.

Shakespeare and the American Nation. By Kim C. Sturgess. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; pp. 232. $65 cloth.

Reviewed by Katherine West Scheil, University of Rhode Island

The combination of Shakespeare and American Studies has recently proven to be fertile ground for scholarly inquiry. In *Shakespeare and the American Nation*, Kim C. Sturgess shows that the subject has not yet been exhausted. Following the work of Lawrence Levine's *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988) and Michael D. Bristol's *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 1990), Sturgess's intriguing book examines how nationalistic appropriations of Shakespeare accorded him the status of a hero in American culture in a climate of strong anti-British sentiment.

Part I, "The Paradox," explores how the American state was ideologically constructed in direct opposition to England through the creation of an "English enemy" to help unite the American population at the same time that Shakespeare was more celebrated than any native writer in America (thus the "paradox"). In the words of James Fenimore Cooper, Shakespeare was "the great author of America" (4). "The Appropriation," Part II of Sturgess's book, examines "how and why Shakespeare was appropriated to the cause of creating a unifying American heritage" (10), concluding with an account of the importance of the Folger Shakespeare Library as a commemoration of Shakespeare in the heart of Capitol Hill.

Chapter 1, which is bolstered by many persuasive statistics, details the mass consumption of Shakespeare by nineteenth-century Americans. Using *Othello* as an example, Sturgess points out that forty-one productions were staged in Mobile, Alabama, between 1832 and 1860, twenty productions in Memphis between 1837 and 1858, and twenty-two productions in Louisville between 1846 and 1860 (15). In his second chapter, Sturgess details the anti-English sentiment that spread at the same time that Americans were celebrating and

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enjoying Shakespeare. As early as 1775, a newspaper article by "Coriolanus" combined anti-English sentiment with Shakespearian echoes from *Henry V*. The writer lamented, "Must we see our flourishing Country pillaged and laid waste, our Houses fired, our Fathers massacred, our Wives, our Mothers, our Sisters, and our Daughters, fall Prey to brutal and inhuman Ravishers; our tender Infants torn from the Breasts, the Walls and Fences sprinkled with their Blood, whilst Cries and Groans transpierce the yielding Air!" (27).

After setting out the paradox of Shakespeare's escape from the prevailing anti-English sentiment in America, Sturgess explains how Shakespeare and his plays were assimilated into "the myths and traditions of the American nation" (55). The seven subsequent chapters tell the story of the appropriation of Shakespeare for American nationalistic purposes, beginning with the first American edition of Shakespeare in 1795. Sturgess argues that the impetus to appropriate Shakespeare for American nation building was "a response to a collective felt need" (55). Emblematic of this desire was the pilgrimage of both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson in 1786 to Warwickshire to visit Shakespeare's birthplace. Nine years later, the first American edition of Shakespeare highlighted the volume's nationalistic origins while making Shakespeare available for mass consumption. The army presented a copy of Shakespeare's works to Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross, for her efforts during the Civil War, and in 1892 the War Service Library supplied American soldiers and sailors with copies of Shakespeare's plays. This "transformation of a collection of play scripts into an inspirational secular 'bible' for the American nation" ensured that future generations would include Shakespeare as part of their "national inheritance" (70).

Theatres, newspapers, and magazines continued to appropriate Shakespeare for a diverse population. Shakespeare was "accepted by both the American intellectual elite and the masses" (94) as the embodiment of the "cultural superiority of English-speaking people" (102). Americans separated the English heritage from the political system through a "cult of Anglo-Saxonism," differentiating between "Anglo" (good) and "English" (bad). Shakespeare "became part of the cultural Anglo-Saxon folklore" (117) that helped unite America as a nation. As a "celebrated personality" in America (124), Shakespeare provided "politically charged 'sound bites'" [*sic*] (126) that were used to bolster ideas of American heroism. Numerous Americans made the strenuous journey to Shakespeare's birthplace in the mid-nineteenth century, including Washington Irving (three times), Margaret Fuller, Martin Van Buren, Henry Clay, Calvin E. Stowe and his future wife Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charles Sumner, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and, perhaps more significantly, thousands of lesser-known Americans.

Expanded public education and literacy increased the readership of Shakespeare, and he became required reading for both schoolchildren and university students. William Dean Howells was the recipient of such an education in rural Ohio, declaring that "the creation of Shakespeare was as great as the creation of a planet." Henry Thoreau preferred Shakespeare for strengthening the mind, as opposed to American literature, which he described as "gingerbread,

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baked daily" (149). Shakespeare was embraced as part of the cultural heritage of a variety of readers, including women, African Americans, and American Indians, although Walt Whitman and Herman Melville remained notable voices of protest.

An intriguing period in the history of Shakespeare in America concerns the authorship question, which was raised for the first time in a book by New York lawyer Joseph C. Hart in 1848. Ohio-born Delia Bacon continued Hart's quest to uncover the secret author of the plays, culminating in her 1857 book *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakspere* [*sic*] *Unfolded.* Bacon argued that an "immortal group of heroes" (171) was responsible for the plays, under the guise of the name "Shakespeare." The authorship question has been a particularly American fascination; between 1857 and 1884 more than 255 works were published in America regarding the Shakespeare–Francis Bacon controversy (176). Sturgess provides some explanation for that phenomenon: the discovery of a "secret political reformer playwright" would allow the plays of Shakespeare to become "more fully part of American heritage" (178).

In his last chapter, Sturgess analyzes the development of an American "national shrine" to Shakespeare (181). Circus owner P. T. Barnum tried to purchase Shakespeare's birthplace and transport it to America, and Americans supported the creation of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford. In the twentieth century, America became the primary guardian of the Shakespeare texts; of the surviving 228 copies of the First Folio, at least 145 are in the United States (191).

As caretaker of seventy-nine Folios, the Folger Shakespeare Library epitomizes the culmination of America's adulation of Shakespeare. Oil magnate Henry Clay Folger was inspired to study and collect Shakespeare after hearing a speech by Emerson at Amherst College. Folger had to obtain permission from Congress to allow the library to exist on property previously allotted for expansion of the Library of Congress. At the Folger, Shakespeare and America are "united in real estate and stone" (191), within walking distance of other nationalistic texts enshrined a few blocks away in the Library of Congress.

Two appendixes (a modernized facsimile of the first American edition of Shakespeare and a map of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C.) and a useful bibliography supplement Sturgess's thoughtful analysis of the fascinating relationship between Shakespeare and America. *Shakespeare and the American Nation* is a worthwhile foray into this exciting field.

The Victorian Marionette Theatre. By John McCormick, with Clodagh McCormick and John Phillips. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004; pp. 272. $49.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Joseph Donohue, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

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John McCormick's delightful book *The Victorian Marionette Theatre* is at once a labor of love, a comprehensive history of a popular art form, an insider's description of the craft by a longtime practitioner, and a nostalgic reminiscence of a nearly forgotten aspect of the Victorian theatre. For all that, the book has an authoritative point of view and a cohesive unity establishing it as one of the most important sources of its kind, complementing George Speaight's more wide-ranging, classic treatment of the subject, *The History of the English Puppet Theatre* (London: G. G. Harrap, 1955; 2d ed., Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990) and McCormick's own companion study, coauthored with Bennie Pratasik, *Popular Puppet Theatre in Europe, 1800–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Those three works anchor a shelf of studies of a major cultural phenomenon.

"There is something more than a flash of genius in the marionette," Gordon Craig asserted in *On the Art of the Theatre*, and "something in him more than the flashiness of displayed personality." McCormick shares Craig's fascination but is well aware of Craig's idiosyncratic modernist espousal of the marionette and his haughty rejection of the human actor's "weakness and tremors of the flesh" (Chicago: Browne's Bookstore, [1911], 82, 81). McCormick's appreciation of the fixed features of the puppet on strings, manipulated by expert masters from behind (and above) the scenes, is much more balanced in its appraisal of the genre and informed by a deep, sympathetic understanding of the popular audience that languished unknowingly beneath Craig's contempt. McCormick surveys the nature and history of the Victorian marionette show as a whole—the art, the craft, the business, and its human dimension—from an unbiased, knowledgeable perspective, devoting an entire book to what Speaight covers in a single chapter.

In a series of exhaustively researched chapters, the author provides a well-constructed, often densely factual account of the proprietors and practitioners of marionette performances and the great array of venues in which they performed; a salient discussion of the relationship between the marionette and the live performer; a description and analysis of the dramatic offerings (largely adapted from the contemporary dramatic repertory of dramas, pantomimes, and farces performed by live actors) that drew heterogeneous, sometimes wildly enthusiastic audiences; and an important comparison of the complementary existence of, on one hand, melodramatic and other plot-driven plays and, on the other, of *fantoccini* and variety performances that depended essentially on tricks or other specialized numbers. Along the way, a separate chapter, "The Anatomy of the Victorian Marionette," explains the stringing, joining, and overall articulation of figures and the techniques of manipulation that together could produce a certain lifelikeness or a charming stylization—part of the inevitable ambiguity that surrounded figures human in shape yet evidently creatures of artifice. Throughout the long history of marionette design and manufacture, there existed a parallel, opposing need for marionettes to be simultaneously lightweight, and thus deftly maneuverable and easily packed and transported, and to be weighted down to achieve a lifelike solidity and convincing groundedness. Authoritative freehand pen-and-ink illustrations by Clodagh McCormick and

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some truly marvelous photographs (including a series in color drawn from the archives of Speaight and McCormick, and many other sources) add considerably to the book's appeal and informativeness. A full-length color illustration of a Scaramouche marionette gracing the dust jacket and the paperback cover is so vivid and delightful, and curiously moving, as to convince the reader of the vitality of McCormick's enterprise even before the book is opened.

The book examines the productive tension between the performance of plays with coherent if simplified actions and variety entertainments with no aim beyond the delicious pleasure they gave. Complementing Speaight's appended lists of plays and puppeteers, McCormick reconstructs the dramatic repertories of several major marionette troupes and analyzes actual scripts—heavily cut to accommodate an often reduced dramatis personae and aimed at satisfying the simpler demands of popular, sometimes unlettered, audiences. He also gives equal attention to *fantoccini*, whose plotless escapades sometimes made up delightful interludes or afterpieces. *Fantoccini*, which came into England from Italy in the eighteenth century and enjoyed a long, colorful history, are epitomized by the even earlier, ubiquitous commedia figure of Scaramouche, the vagaries of whose history reify the outline of the genre as a whole. Performed by a live actor in company with a Harlequin and a Pulcinello at Bartholomew Fair in 1699, Scaramouche became a puppet by the early eighteenth century, eventually abandoning his black costume and beret in favor of the more brightly colored dress of the buffoon. McCormick explains that, in a still later nineteenth-century incarnation as a *fantoccini* marionette, Scaramouche's major feature was "the ability to conceal his head within his body and then to produce it at the right moment, at the end of a disproportionately long neck" (151). So taken were audiences with such bravura tricks and episodes that, over time, such incidental entertainments began to force out the dramatic side of marionette fare. Ironically, even as the shift of emphasis grew more pronounced in response to audience taste, by the end of Victoria's reign, marionette troupes were diminishing overall in number and resources; they dwindled increasingly as the cinema began to engage the imaginations of live- and marionette-theatre audiences alike. The heyday of the form was past. Advertisements appeared in the show-business weekly *The Era* offering entire sets of marionettes for sale. At one late point a much-worn set was discovered abandoned in a provincial public house. Yet they never entirely disappeared; I remember taking my daughters as children to the Angel Marionette Theatre in Islington, in the late 1960s.

In his preface, McCormick gives generous credit to John Phillips, long active as a scholar in the field, who at his death passed on all his notes to McCormick; they came to form "the genesis of the present book" (xi). Yet McCormick has clearly made the subject his own, liberating it from being merely "a distraction for infants and the simple-minded" (x). Despite a disappointingly brief index of proper names only, McCormick can be credited with a much greater and happier achievement.

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Women's Contribution to Nineteenth-Century American Theatre. Edited by Miriam López Rodríguez and María Dolores Narbona Carrión. Biblioteca Javier Coy d'estudis nord-americans. València: Universitat de València, 2004; pp. 183. €20 paper.

Reviewed by Karl M. Kippola, American University

Most scholars of American drama and theatre acknowledge that women's contributions to the field, especially those prior to the twentieth century, have been underrepresented. Over the past twenty-five years, scholars have begun to address a number of those glaring omissions. *Women in American Theatre* (New York: Crown, 1981; rev, and exp,, New York: TCG, 1987), edited by Helen Krich Chinoy and Linda Walsh Jenkins, fired the first resounding salvo, addressing an enormous range of material. Faye Dudden's outstanding *Women in the American Theatre: Actresses & Audiences, 1790–1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) provided a more focused study and insight into countless previously unknown figures. Amelia Howe Kritzer's *Plays by Early American Women, 1775–1850* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995) brought to the surface many plays and dramatists never before anthologized.

Women's Contribution to Nineteenth-Century American Theatre, edited by Miriam López Rodríguez and María Dolores Narbona Carrión and the latest in the series Biblioteca Javier Coy d'estudis nord-americans, is a collection of essays examining prominent (and not so prominent) female dramatists, novelists, critics, managers, and actors: "Women focused on in this book deserve the attention they receive for several reasons: not only did they contribute to the creation of American theatre, but they also dared enter the public field of drama at a time when society did not approve of it" (9). Although each of the theatrical figures presents an intriguing story, the selection of women appears haphazard. The editors could do more to draw together the disparate elements and discuss their collective impact, both on theatre practice and women's evolving roles in society.

The best of the articles, however, open fascinating windows into unexplored territory. In her study of Susanna Haswell Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers*, Kristen Kaye Thoen shows drama used as a tool of women's rights in the early republic. Thoen effectively illustrates Rowson's efforts toward educational reform and gender equality in the political uncertainty of the late eighteenth century. Eliana Crestani's exploration of the life, career, and consciously constructed identity of touring actor-manager Nellie Boyd provides compelling insights into the "cultural development of growing communities in the American West" (138). Although locating subtle feminist subversion in Boyd's artistic choices may stretch credibility, Crestani does reveal a remarkably perceptive businessperson who gave the public precisely what it wanted onstage and off. Zoë Detsi-Diamanti provides an excellent study of Charlotte Barnes's romantic tragedy *Octavia Bragaldi* as an example of "the complex implications of political and sexual ideology in women's struggle for autonomy and self-definition" (56). Detsi-Diamanti successfully exposes how female dramatists of the early

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nineteenth century struggled with the inherent dichotomy in the promised equality and freedom of republican rhetoric and the reality of women's subjugation. Rebecca Dunn Jaroff also studies Barnes, culling a compelling biographical sketch of the actor and dramatist from the limited resources available. However, it is odd that a book with only twelve contributing articles attempting to address a century of theatre and drama should focus two of those studies on the same figure, doubling much of the same information.

Several of the articles paint interesting pictures but fall short of demonstrating fully how these women of the American theatre contributed to America's drama or struggle for gender equality. Bonnie J. Eckard effectively examines the extreme Camilles of actresses Matilda Heron and Clara Morris, who shared a lack of technique and traditional stage beauty but who were admired for their overwhelming emotional abandon. Eckard provides useful social and theatrical context but only hints at how those women transformed America's perceptions of actresses and acting. Amelia Howe Kritzer creates an intriguing picture of activist and occasional theatre critic Margaret Fuller, a vocal champion of women's "right and ability to explore the world fully on their own and . . . [un]confined by prejudice and convention" (83). Although Fuller clearly was an important figure, she appeared to encourage drama in the abstract only, and Kritzer never fully explains Fuller's actual impact on theatre of the period. Pere Gifra Adroher touches upon the theatrical dabbling (as critic, actor, and dramatist) of Kate Fields, whose enthusiastic pursuit of multifaceted interests clearly showed the potential for women to make a living in the theatre; but Adroher fails to communicate the weight of Fields's theatrical forays. Ruth Stoner examines portrayals of actresses in the fiction of Rebecca Harding Davis, who presented the stage as a potentially profitable career, albeit one lacking glamour or joy. However, Stoner needs to make explicit how Davis's vision of the theatre influenced her readers. Yvonne Shafer successfully demystifies the reclusive and enigmatic life and career of the enormously popular actress Maude Adams, exposing the mundane facts of her life but providing a frustrating lack of insight into her popularity or the motivations for her isolation.

Both coeditors contribute compelling materials, but their writing suggests a lack of complete felicity with English prose. Carrión effectively identifies and defends the political underpinnings of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's *Within the Gates*. Rodríguez presents an interesting biography of melodramatist Louisa Medina; but although Medina's story is intriguing, Rodríguez misses an opportunity to provide insight into possibly the most successful and prolific American dramatist of the 1830s and the intrigues that surrounded Medina's associations with Thomas Hamblin and the Bowery Theatre.

Marilyn Shapiro's puzzlingly titled "Anna Cora Mowatt: Forgotten Dramatist and Actress" focuses primarily on *Fashion*, the most (and often only) anthologized female-authored play of America's nineteenth century. Shapiro ends her study with Arthur Miller's often quoted "attention must be paid." *Women's Contribution to Nineteenth-Century American Theatre* too often is content to demand attention for its female subjects without truly demonstrating a compelling reason. However, the modest ambitions of this book do not negate

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the importance of the figures it lauds. This collection illustrates that women of the theatre shaped the nineteenth-century American stage and women's struggle for recognition in profound ways; but they also participated in a number of less obvious ways that nonetheless, in incremental steps, helped to make our theatre and culture what it is today.

The Most American Thing in America: Circuit Chautauqua as Performance. By Charlotte M. Canning. Studies in Theatre History & Culture. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005; pp. 268. $34.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Don B. Wilmeth, Brown University

Charlotte Canning's *The Most American Thing in America: Circuit Chautauqua as Performance* bemoans the confusion that still persists in distinguishing the Chautauqua Institution founded in upstate New York in 1874 from Circuit Chautauqua, which existed from 1904 into the Great Depression and toured rural America each summer under the readily identified brown tent (a deliberate contrast to the white top of the circus, which Chautauqua condemned). Canning states that "one is hard-pressed to find significant numbers of people who have ever heard of Circuit Chautauqua. . .. It does not seem to have entered into the American mythos" (2).

I hope that this overstates the reality. Surely those who study American culture and performance have some rudimentary knowledge of this unique American institution, hyperbolically termed (and the title of Canning's book), "the most American thing in America," most likely coined by the frequently hyperbolic Teddy Roosevelt. Then again, the confusion over the two Chautauquas no doubt still persists. Canning's generally thorough study of Circuit Chautauqua, with its mixture of education, entertainment, and oratory, should now once and for all settle any such confusion.

Following current historiographical trends, Canning is thankfully concerned with more than Circuit Chautauqua's history and establishing its importance in our cultural past. Her objective is to demonstrate how this traveling institution promised to inspire cultural community, and individual improvement through performance of various kinds. It is the evocation of performance that distinguishes her study from most others on the subject—and there are a sizable number of those. Her hope that her book will "evoke Chautauqua in such a way that those who participated in it would recognize what they knew as Chautauqua" (3) is admirable. Performance becomes her analytical framework, for she believes that the performer as opposed to the writer "has been a more dominant presence on the American stage" (5).

Canning's title is perhaps somewhat misleading; for, as her text surely illustrates, the America that Chautauqua reflects was rural, or at most small-town, even though the circuits were ultimately national in scope—by 1921 there

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were over nine thousand separate units, and millions attended. Her assertion that one could use the Circuits to write a history of the United States during the first decades of the twentieth century—with "all the relevant concerns of the time—citizenship, race, community, gender, politics, government, quality of life, foreign affairs, family" (21)—is only partially true, for rural and agrarian America of this crucial period in our history is not the same as urban and industrial America, as Canning herself suggests in stressing the importance of community for Circuit Chautauqua.

Canning's five-chapter examination of Circuit Chautauqua, which will likely remain the definitive overview for some years to come, begins with a useful introduction setting up her parameters and method of analysis. Chapter 1 (the most contextualized, historicized chapter) provides a wide overview and examines "how Chautauqua aligned itself with national interests" (21). "Why and how the Circuits seized on notions of community as a crucial focus for their performances" (22), with a focus on race and gender, provides the thrust of Chapter 2, whereas Chapter 3 looks at the "tent both as a literal entity and a metaphorical idea" (22), in addition to a fascinating semiotic analysis of Chautauqua programs and advertising. As she states in this chapter, her intent is not to examine "so much what the Circuits performed to make the case for the small town but how they used the Chautauqua itself to make that case" (115). That aim is, in fact, characteristic of the entire book.

Finally, Chapters 4 and 5 focus on performance itself. Chapter 4 concentrates on what is arguably the most vaunted performative form on the Chautauqua platform—oratory, as it increasingly moved into the somewhat suspect form, elocution. The chapter includes excellent analyses of the most prominent figures in the realm of oration, especially William Jennings Bryan and Russell Conwell (Bryant's major competitor, with his "Acres of Diamonds" oration), and elocutionists Katharine Ridgeway, Lucille Adams, and Gay MacLaren, among others. By 1913, Circuit Chautauqua began offering theatrical productions, beginning with the Ben Greet Players. Chapter 5 examines "the challenge . . . to include theater as a demonstration of Circuit Chautauqua's conformation to community values, albeit an unusual one that chanced being viewed as a loss of respectability" (187), and does so quite successfully, noting the audiences' distrust of overt displays of emotion and illusion as a means to sway them in a form considered by most as immoral and irrational. Canning effectively examines the changes that theatrical offerings brought to the Circuits and Chautauqua's "ingenious redefinition of theater . . . a redefinition that distinguished reputable dramatic literature from the material attributes of theatrical illusion . . ." (23). Finally, a conclusion ("The Palimpsestic Platform") "assesses the effects of Circuit Chautauqua and points to its legacies" (23).

Canning's good work, another study in the superb Studies in Theatre History & Culture expertly edited by Thomas Postlewait, will provide a much-needed resource. It has few errors and my caveats are minor: I wish that more could have been said about Chautauqua's audience; that one of the major forms of entertainment in Chautauqua, music, had been given a chapter (the only major musical group that we read about is the Jubilee Singers, but as part of the

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"missionary work" inculcated by Chautauqua and not as musical entertainment per se); that methods and strategies appropriated from other popular entertainments and parallels with other entertainments (e.g., vaudeville) had been given even more attention (magic, for instance, was a major form of entertainment on the Chautauqua platform but is not even mentioned). Naturally, I wish that my name had not been spelled Wilmith in two places; that the Cleveland Playhouse had been correctly cited as Play House; that a bibliography had been included; and that Canning had identified F. W. Keith (he is not B. F., who had died by the time this Keith is mentioned, nor B. F.'s son Andrew Paul). Minor criticisms all, when one considers the many positive aspects of this book, including dozens of wonderful illustrations (but no list of these); an excellent analysis of the system, structure, and operation of Circuit Chautauqua; and an objective assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the movement, among other attributes.

Local Acts: Community-Based Performance in the United States. By Jan Cohen-Cruz. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005; pp. 213. $24.95 paper.

Reviewed by Bruce McConachie, University of Pittsburgh

Theatre historians and practitioners in the academy have been slow to recognize the validity and significance of the community-based theatre movement in the United States. With the exception of a few books and articles, most of the scholarly literature on community-based theatre remains squirreled away in local reports, unpublished dissertations, and Web sites infrequently visited (at least by theatre academics). Perhaps this should not be surprising; compared to Australia, Latin America, and most of Europe, community-based theatre in the United States is scandalously underfunded and unknown. Among its many virtues, Jan Cohen-Cruz's *Local Acts* will raise the profile of community-based performance in the academy and perhaps spark more books in the field as well as courses and community-related projects in theatre and performance departments.

Following an introduction that outlines the scope and direction of her study, Cohen-Cruz begins with a brief history of the field. She traces community-based performance back to the civic pageants at the turn of the twentieth century and comments on its legacies from the Little Theatre movement, the Harlem Renaissance, working-class theatre in the 1930s, the Federal Theatre Project, initiatives joining rural communities to academic departments, and the avant-garde and political theatres of the 1960s and 1970s. According to her narrative, there was a gradual transition from the identity-based theatres of the 1960s to the localism and grassroots initiatives that began emerging in the late 1970s. Cohen-Cruz locates one turning point in this transition in 1985, when

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actor-director John O'Neal conducted a funeral for his Free Southern Theatre so that Junebug Productions, organized to facilitate community participation, might take its place. A second important step occurred when O'Neal and Dudley Cocke of Roadside Theatre in Appalachia temporarily merged their companies for productions that brought together white and black audiences. Later, both O'Neal and Cocke were instrumental in forming the American Festival Project, a coalition of several community-based theatres that work together to provide ideas and artists to catalyze local efforts.

While Cohen-Cruz's history tells a tale of progress and honors the leaders in the field (which include several women), the significant institutions of community-based theatre and their continuing means of support are not entirely clear from her narrative. At one point, she lists past major funders, which have included the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, but notes that several substantial grants are ending and that other funders are moving from long-term to project-based support. Although Cohen-Cruz invites us to believe that the field of community-based theatre is on firm ground today, it appears that the material base for its ongoing success is eroding.

I found the middle section of the book, where Cohen-Cruz discusses the philosophical principles of the field, the weakest. Instead of examining the operations of several representative companies and deriving their ethics and goals from their work, Cohen-Cruz lays several theoretical templates over their practices in an attempt to distinguish community-based theatre from other types of performance. For example, she applies Raymond Williams's five definitions of popular culture to community-based practices to demonstrate that this kind of theatre mostly fits those definitions, reads the field against Lani Guinier's distinction between participatory and representative democracy to show how it aligns with the participatory side of the dualism, and lays van Gennep's rites-of-passage matrix over an idealized process of community-based production to open up its emphasis on reciprocity. Schechner's ritual–art dichotomy is perhaps the most misleading of these templates, allowing Cohen-Cruz to praise the benefits of all community-based performance at the expense of mere ordinary theatre, which (in this structuralism) can only entertain passive spectators and elevate power-hungry artists.

Cohen-Cruz endorses Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process as appropriate for community-based theatre. I, too, have found Lerman's dialogic mode of criticism productive, but she fashioned it to facilitate an even-handed exchange between all artists and audiences, not just those engaged in community-based performances, as Cohen-Cruz implies. While the author is right to point to the difficulties of criticizing community-based performances, which should not be measured with the same yardstick as professional theatre, she underestimates the role that appropriate evaluative standards and processes must play for funders in making future decisions.

I found the last third of the book the most enjoyable and insightful. Here Cohen-Cruz puts aside many of her earlier, reified distinctions to analyze and celebrate the work of some of the best companies in the field. These include Dell'Arte Company, in northern California, and Teatro Pregones, based in New

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York, companies that draw on several popular traditions of Western theatre for their mostly rural and Puerto Rican audiences, respectively. Cohen-Cruz also examines Lerman's Dance Exchange, which has been facilitating dance-theatre productions with variously talented and aged performers in many communities since 1976. In this final section, Cohen-Cruz focuses on personal storytelling as the "signature methodology" (129) of community-based performance. She discusses its therapeutic as well as political potential and its use by many theatres and performers, including Augusto Boal, Anna Deavere Smith, and others who span the usual divide between community-based and professional theatre. Cohen-Cruz's analysis of storytelling in her own project, a community-based effort to celebrate and save neighborhood gardens in NYC, is persuasive and evocative.

Women, Modernism, & Performance. By Penny Farfan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; pp. 173, 6 illus. $75 cloth.

Reviewed by Margaret F. Savilonis, independent scholar

Penny Farfan's *Women, Modernism, & Performance*, six intricately woven essays about a handful of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century female artists, is an absorbing study centered on the premise that "the feminist-modernist aesthetics of key figures in the fields of dance and literature developed in part out of their engagement with dramatic literature and theatrical practice, making their lives and work a part of theatre history" (2). Employing broad definitions of both performance and modernism, Farfan casts a wide net, adopting what she describes as a "'maximalist' approach" (117) to construct her arguments about these artists' contributions to "the transformation of the representation of gender in both art and life" (119). Her consideration of public performances such as courtroom trials, lectures, and "the performance of gender in the practice of everyday life" (3) informs her analysis of literary, critical, and performance texts to intriguing effect. In the process, Farfan delineates the cultural landscape out of which these women and their work emerged.

In the direct and persuasive first chapter, Farfan examines Elizabeth Robins's "early feminist critique of Ibsen" (11), detailing the artist's complex engagement with Ibsen's scripts at various stages in her career as an actress, critic, playwright, and suffragist. Beginning with a discussion of Ibsen's tragic heroine Hedda Gabler as an "incongruous" feminist icon, Farfan introduces several of her study's primary motifs, such as the influence of Ibsen's work, the politics of representation, and the varying goals and definitions of feminism at the turn of the century. Much of the chapter is devoted to an analysis of Robins's "dramatic tract" *Votes for Women* (1907), a play that Farfan argues "communicated [Robins's] much broader and less topical sense of the need to

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create . . . conditions conducive to the development of women's potential" (32). This examination of Robins's evolving feminism (along with the ways in which her artistic experiences formed—and were formed by—her political beliefs) sets the stage for the ensuing chapters, in which Farfan explores, with progressive complexity, the relationship between art and life.

Chapters 2 and 3 work together as effective examples of Farfan's claim that women's "responses to dramatic literature and theatrical practice in effect constituted feminist critical discourse both through theatre and about theatre itself" (2). Farfan segues smoothly from her discussion of Robins into a look at actress Ellen Terry's realism-rejecting career, opening Chapter 2 with Terry's dismissal of the "silly ladies" of Ibsen's plays (34), again using Hedda as a starting point. Farfan expands her consideration of Terry's contributions to theatre history beyond her work as an actress, including Terry's public lectures on Shakespeare's heroines and essays in which she theorizes about the concepts of realism, reality, and representation. Farfan challenges the assumption that Terry's anti-Ibsenism equaled antifeminism; rather, she proposes, Terry explored the feminist possibilities offered by the "larger-than-life" characters in Shakespeare's plays, whom Terry described as "*resolute* women . . . ready for action, a hundred times more independent than the heroines created by writers in these later days" (43). Farfan carries her examination of Terry through into Chapter 3. Here, Farfan argues that Virginia Woolf's 1935 play *Freshwater* (in which Terry is a character) and Woolf's essays about Terry and such other nineteenth-century actresses as Sarah Bernhardt and Rachel, reveal Woolf's idealization of "the stage as a potential site for expansive and liberating self-expression" (50).

Farfan's detailed reading of Djuna Barnes's one-act play *The Dove* (1923) provides the frame for Chapter 4's examination of obscenity and the connections between culture at large and stage representations. In this chapter, Farfan skillfully weaves analyses and explications of Barnes's script, the Renaissance painting *Two Venetian Courtesans* (c. 1510, by Carpaccio; Museo Civico Correr, Venice), Radclyffe Hall's 1928 novel *The Well of Loneliness* and its subsequent obscenity trial, *Hedda Gabler*, Virginia Woolf, Ellen Terry, Edith Craig, and Cicely Hamilton's 1909 suffragist drama *A Pageant of Great Women*. It is the most ambitious chapter; and, although it could easily have become sprawling, Farfan's finely drawn connections among the ways in which literary, visual, and performing arts reveal, reflect, and rebuff cultural attitudes about gender succeed because her argument is carefully grounded in specifics.

The first four chapters dovetail with each other in interesting and surprising ways, creating a thoroughly engaging, multifaceted historical narrative. However, the connecting threads begin to wear thin as Farfan attempts in Chapter 5 to extrapolate "a theory of the transformative potential of art for social actors" from the work of Virginia Woolf, and to "[qualify it] by a consideration of the posthumous reputation of Isadora Duncan" in Chapter 6 (118). Although I am open to Farfan's claim that Woolf's involvement in the elaborate practical joke known as the "*Dreadnought* Hoax" suggests Woolf's "interest in performance as a site of subversive potential" (90–1), the density of the material

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is not well served by the brevity of this chapter. Similarly, Farfan's debunking of the myth of the "cultural icon of the tragic female artist" (102) through her look at the American dancer Isadora Duncan—which cleverly returns to the initial "modern heroine," Hedda Gabler—is tantalizing, but the hastiness of this complex discussion left me frustrated.

By engaging in a project that aims to offer a counternarrative to the "narratives of modern theatre history that . . . do not address the efforts of women artists to develop alternatives to both mainstream theatre practice and to the patriarchal avant garde" (2), Farfan relies to a certain extent on the reader's knowledge of those narratives. As a result, the text may be slightly overwhelming for those who are not already familiar with the period and the people that Farfan discusses. *Women, Modernism, & Performance* is, nevertheless, a fascinating look at modern theatre history. Farfan's use of nontheatrical texts is inspired and thought provoking, and her study has much to offer theatre scholars in terms of both content and form, as her ambitious scope and style may serve others well as a model for historical studies.

Riot and Great Anger: Stage Censorship in Twentieth-Century Ireland. By Joan FitzPatrick Dean. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004; pp. xiii + 261, 1 illus. $45 cloth.

Reviewed by Karin Maresh, Washington and Jefferson College

Joan FitzPatrick Dean's *Riot and Great Anger: Stage Censorship in Twentieth-Century Ireland* is a welcome addition to Irish theatre studies. Although there is a plethora of scholarship available on specific theatrical riots in Ireland, and several studies detail the censorship in Ireland of publications, film, and television, no other single work documents in its totality the tradition of theatrical disorder and stage censorship in twentieth-century Ireland.

In the first few pages, Dean includes a single and telling illustration. Originally run in the 1909 Irish *Weekly Independent* at the time of the Abbey Theatre's row with Dublin Castle over the Abbey's production of G. B. Shaw's *The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet*, the sketch depicts Yeats brazenly standing against the wrath of censorship with sword and shield held high to protect his dear theatre. As Dean argues, this image is demonstrative of twentieth-century Irish theatre and its relationship with those vigilante organizations and influential politicians and clergy who felt that it was their duty to call for the prohibition of plays they deemed a threat to the Irish public. More important, the image evokes a central aspect of the book: that, although it has banned and bowdlerized countless films and novels, the Irish government has never institutionalized theatrical censorship. Prior to the 1968 dissolution of England's licensing act—an act that did not extend to Ireland—producers such as Yeats prided themselves on

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knowing that what the Lord Chamberlain prohibited British audiences from seeing could and did play in Ireland.

Dean charts her course through Irish stage censorship chronologically in nine chapters and describes her study as being concerned with why certain "plays were viewed as threatening, evil, or immoral and why some people, willing to abridge civil liberties through institutional stage censorship, were eager to proscribe them" (10). The first chapter of *Riot and Great Anger* contextualizes the subject matter, focusing on the role of censorship in Ireland and explaining why British censorship laws did not extend to Ireland. The chapter also creates a typology of theatre protest and a taxonomy of theatre censorship. In addition, Dean establishes two primary motivating forces for theatrical protest and stage censorship in twentieth-century Ireland: politics, particularly Irish nationalism; and "Catholic anxiety" (36) about theatre. Those forces that provoke the veritably mythologized controversies over W. B. Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen* in 1899 and J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* in 1907 are the foci for Chapters 2 and 3, respectively. For many Irish nationalists in the early decades of the century, questions of "what was Irish and what constituted ridicule of the Irish" (113) informed their reception of characters such as Synge's Christy Mahon, especially when the playwright was a Protestant. Dean also addresses the role of politics in Northern Irish theatre decades later, when plays such as Sam Thompson's *Over the Bridge* (1959) garnered calls for censorship for their too realistic depiction of sectarian conflict. Thompson's play caused enough concern for the theatre's board to compel the withdrawal of the play before its opening.

One of the more interesting cases examined by Dean appears in Chapter 5. In 1914 in Westport, Ireland, several audience members viewing a production of George A. Birmingham's *General John Regan* erupted in violence as part of a planned protest against a play that, they believed, caricatured their parish priest. By the end of the evening, the theatre had endured extensive damage, at least one man had sustained injuries, and police had arrested twenty men (100–1). It was the most violent Irish theatre riot of the twentieth century and, according to Dean, provides a rare example of theatrical disorder resulting from external factors rather than from a play's content.

The most significant assertion in *Riot and Great Anger* is that Ireland's much-lauded history of theatrical riots and disorder and ad hoc stage censorship actually ensured freedom of expression for both artists and audiences. To that end, Dean demonstrates in Chapter 6 how, even in a predominately Catholic and seemingly unified new Irish Free State, Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) diffused the threat of stage censorship by exposing "how little political consensus there was in the Free State and how impossible stage censorship would have been to legislate" (125). Reactions to the play varied from moral outrage over the character of Rosie Redmond, a prostitute, to anger over the representation of Irish Citizen Army men as cowardly (122). In Chapter 8, the lengthiest in the book, Dean examines those productions that she believes to have finally defeated the issue of an institutionalized stage censorship in Ireland, including the Pike Theatre's production of Tennessee Williams's *The Rose Tattoo* (1957) and the 1959 production of J. P. Donleavy's *The Ginger Man* at the Gaiety Theatre.

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The subsequent arrest of the Pike's cofounder over a complaint that he had produced "'a performance which was indecent and profane'" (157), and the cancellation of *The Ginger Man* by the Gaiety at the urging of the archbishop, seemed absurd to most observers and discredited further discussion of an official stage censorship policy in Ireland.

In her final chapter, Dean provides evidence of continued censorship of the stage in both Northern Ireland and the Republic, a result of that double-edged sword of state funding. For example, in 1999 the Arts Council of Northern Ireland withheld funding promised to Dubbeljoint for their production of *Forced Upon Us*, a blatant denunciation of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, claiming that their decision came from the company's failure to turn in a completed script on time rather than on the play's content.

Dean does not repeat widely published information about the many persons figuring into her case studies; nor does she describe specific plays or productions. For these reasons *Riot and Great Anger* will be most useful for those already familiar with Irish theatre. However, the general reader will also find Dean's careful examination of stage censorship in Ireland engaging and informative.

Each $17.95 paper.

Konstantin Stanislavsky. By Bella Merlin. Routledge Performance Practitioners. London and New York: Routledge, 2003; pp. xii + 172, 9 illus. $17.95 paper.

Michael Chekhov. By Franc Chamberlain. Routledge Performance Practitioners. London and New York: Routledge, 2004; pp. xii + 154, 7 illus. $17.95 paper.

Vsevolod Meyerhold. By Jonathan Pitches. Routledge Performance Practitioners. London and New York: Routledge, 2003; pp. xii + 164, 13 illus. $17.95 paper.

Jacques Lecoq. By Simon Murray. Routledge Performance Practitioners. London and New York: Routledge, 2003; pp. xiv + 182, $17.95 paper.

Reviewed by Jerri Daboo, University of Exeter, UK

The Routledge Performance Practitioners series, edited by Franc Chamberlain, is a new set of introductory guides to a range of key figures in the development of twentieth-century performance practice. Each book focuses on a single practitioner, examining his or her life, historical context, key writings, and productions, and a selection of practical exercises. These concise volumes are intended to offer students an initial introduction to the practitioner and to "provide an inspiring spring-board for future study, unpacking and explaining what can initially seem daunting" (Merlin, ii). The list of practitioners in the complete series include Stanislavsky, Brecht, Boal, Lecoq, Grotowski, Anna

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Halprin, and Ariane Mnouchkine, thus examining a range of performance styles and practices, creating a valuable overview of the development of performer training through the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries. Such interest in the history of specific approaches to training performers has been addressed in other volumes, such as *Twentieth-Century Actor Training*, edited by Alison Hodge (New York: Routledge, 2000), and *Acting (Re)considered: A Theoretical and Practical Guide*, edited by Phillip Zarrilli (London: Routledge 2002). Both those collections contain in-depth chapters focusing on aspects of the selected practitioners' theoretical and practical approaches to the principles and concerns in their work. Where the books in the Routledge Performance Practitioners series differ is that they offer a more general overview of the practitioner in one volume, and in addition to the historical context, they provide a set of practical exercises that can be carried out by the student or teacher, as well as by the actor or director. The books are well presented, divided into clear sections, with relevant photographs and diagrams. There are also sidebars providing definitions and further information on key figures and terms mentioned in the main text. This review covers the first four books in the series, examining the work of Konstantin Stanislavsky, Michael Chekhov, Vsevolod Meyerhold, and Jacques Lecoq.

***Konstantin Stanislavsky*, by Bella Merlin.** Bella Merlin begins the series with an excellent and much-needed reexamination of the work of Stanislavsky. In the first chapter discussing his life and context, she highlights many of the challenges inherent in approaching this often misinterpreted practitioner, who was so significant in the development of actor training in the West. As she points out, Stanislavsky moved in many different directions in his search for theatrical "truth" and the defining of his system, so there is an immediate problem in attempting to pin down one clear picture of his work. Particularly important is Merlin's exposition at the end of that first chapter on Stanislavsky's final exploration in his last years into the Method of Physical Action and Active Analysis. Rather than emphasize emotion memory exclusively, for which he is primarily known, she addresses the importance of physical action within Stanislavsky's work. She also highlights the current debate regarding Active Analysis, and her positioning of it within this book is a major contribution to the reviewing of Stanislavsky's work. This places it within the context of the research by scholars such as Sharon Carnicke and Jean Benedetti, who are attempting to bring into the public domain material and issues that have hitherto not been available in the West. In the second chapter, Merlin offers a clear analysis and explanation of Stanislavsky's *An Actor Prepares*, one of the most widely used books on the technique of acting. Her examination of his notion of Communion is especially useful, as it is one of the most misunderstood areas of Stanislavsky's work. Chapter 3 is an in-depth exploration of the Moscow Art Theatre's 1898 production of *The Seagull*, which provides many interesting and detailed insights into both the aesthetics and the approach of the actors to that milestone production in theatre history. The final chapter introduces a range of practical exercises, presented in a way that makes them completely usable in a professional or educational context. There are specific training exercises for finding the

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Given Circumstances and Objectives, and an introduction to ways of working with the Method of Physical Action and Active Analysis. This book is of significance to anyone engaging with Stanislavsky's system as either a practitioner or an academic and offers, in succinct form, a way into understanding the complexities involved in attempting to discover the many innovative methods and discoveries he made in his lifetime.

***Michael Chekhov*, by Franc Chamberlain.** The work of Michael Chekhov is currently undergoing a revival in popularity, and Franc Chamberlain's book goes some way toward demonstrating the reasons for that. From his early acting days as the brilliant pupil of Stanislavsky, Chekhov began developing his own approach to creating a character through imagination and forms of movement that can lead to a psychophysical integration and his ideal of Creative Individuality. In the first chapter, Chamberlain briefly outlines Chekhov's life through the different stages and locations of his work, with additional short entries giving details about the various actors and directors mentioned. The second chapter examines *On the Technique of Acting*, Mel Gordon's and Mala Powers's edited version of Chekhov's manuscript "To the Actor" (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991). (Chamberlain acknowledges that *On the Technique of Acting* is not the most up-to-date version of the manuscript, having been superseded by *To the Actor*, edited by Mala Powers [New York: Routledge 2002]. Indeed, the latter edition is the most comprehensive, but it was not readily available when he was writing, and thus he used the earlier one.) Chamberlain offers clear and succinct descriptions of the key terms and exercises developed by Chekhov, which provide a good general overview of Chekhov's work. The third chapter focuses on Chekhov's directing, for which he is not best known, but Chamberlain defends that choice by exploring some productions that Chekhov did with his students, thus incorporating his work as a teacher as well. The final chapter, containing practical exercises, offers clear and practical examples of ways to begin exploring some of the techniques. Although overall this is a good basic examination of Chekhov's life and work, the student or actor would also do well to read Chekhov's own words in the very comprehensive *To the Actor.*

***Vsevolod Meyerhold*, by Jonathan Pitches.** Jonathan Pitches entitles his first chapter "A Life of Contradictions." Those words indeed sum up the complex and ultimately tragic life of this important practitioner in the development of his unique approach to actor training. Pitches takes us through the various stages in Meyerhold's development, from his days with Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko, to the later influence of symbolism and commedia dell'arte, and through the innovation of biomechanics. He concludes the chapter by briefly detailing the way in which Meyerhold's ideas and exercises have managed to be kept alive, despite the efforts of Stalin to eradicate his name and work. Chapter 2 is an examination of a selection of key writings that, as Pitches points out, can be "quite daunting" (43). He sets out the range of writing over three decades, describing the inherent problems with style, references, and contradictions, before focusing on such key areas as naturalism, rhythm and music, the grotesque, biomechanics, and a theory of

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montage. This chapter does indeed demonstrate the complexities of the variety of forms, techniques, and influences that Meyerhold explored over his lifetime, and Pitches offers a useful way into understanding their differences and developments. Chapter 3 is a discussion of the background, style, and training methods used in Meyerhold's landmark production of Gogol's *The Government Inspector*, which, as Pitches states, is "the grand synthesis of his ideas" (108); and it demonstrates Meyerhold's ability as a director as well as an innovator in actor training. The final chapter contains practical exercises based in biomechanics, with useful photographs of some of the études as well as improvisation exercises and ways of working on text. This is an important book in that it brings a broader understanding of Meyerhold's work to wider audience, and provides a comprehensive introduction to his ideas and working methods.

***Jacques Lecoq*, by Simon Murray.** Simon Murray points out that there has still been little written about the life and work of Jacques Lecoq, who has been a hugely influential figure in actor training in the last half of the twentieth century. Murray goes a long way toward readdressing that in his book. The first chapter in particular is a very informative discussion of the influences on the development of his work, as well as of the historical and cultural context of the time, that will be of interest to anyone studying the emergence of what might be termed "physical theatre." In Chapter 2, Murray draws on the comparatively small amount of Lecoq's own writings, which include a discussion of the *via negativa*, his use of imagery, the approach to teaching in his school, and mime and movement. In a break from the pattern in previous books, the third chapter focuses on productions by other companies that have been influenced by Lecoq. Murray states that this is because there is very little evidence of his work as a director; so, instead, he discusses the productions of two companies that utilize Lecoq's techniques—Theatre de Complicite, and Mummenschanz. The chapter offers some fascinating insights into the history and working methods of those two companies, and certainly demonstrates how Lecoq's work has been of considerable influence in the creation of new perspectives on performance. Chapter 4 is a brief presentation of some of Lecoq's exercises, but Murray himself points out that this is a very challenging task, taking into account both the richness and range of Lecoq's work, and also the possible danger of reducing an embodied learning system to the written word. As Murray says, the exercises offer a flavor of aspects of the work and, as such, are a useful introduction. The concluding chapter highlights some of the seeming paradoxes in Lecoq's ideas and questions what might be seen to be the reality of Lecoq's "dream for the 'theatre of tomorrow'" (159). The volume is a crucial addition to the series, and Murray provides an important introduction to the context and influence of this key figure in actor training.

The series overall offers an excellent introduction to the life and work of the selected practitioners and, as such, is a very good resource for students and actors. My only concern is that students might use these books as their sole resource, rather than as a springboard for further research, which would limit their understanding of the range and depth of each practitioner. If the books are

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used as introductory guides from which to grasp the basics, then they can certainly encourage and direct students toward reading primary materials and other sources, fostering a fuller appreciation of the work of these key figures in the development of actor training and performance.

The Theatre of Suzuki Tadashi. By Ian Carruthers and Takahashi Yasunari. Directors in Perspective. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; pp. xxxiii + 293, 42 illus. $95 cloth.

Reviewed by Julie A. Iezzi, University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Suzuki Tadashi is arguably Japan's best known and most influential contemporary director, and this long-awaited comprehensive study presents a complete picture of his work to date. An eleven-page detailed production chronology at the beginning of the book lists everything from Suzuki's first production at the Waseda Free Stage (Jiyū Butai) Drama Society in 1959, through his opera *Vision of Lear* for the Third International Theatre Olympics in Moscow in 2001. This who-what-when-where chronological reference allows one to map quickly the arc of Suzuki's career, from his work as a director in Japan and his rise to international recognition in the 1970s, through his roles as International Festival coordinator and actor trainer, to his artistic directorships at the Acting Company Mito (ACM) and later Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC) in the 1990s.

Takahashi's brief introduction situates Suzuki's work within the context of Japan's Little Theatre movement of the 1960s. Carruthers follows in Chapter 1 with an in-depth description of Suzuki's early experiments with the Waseda Little Theatre (Waseda Shogekijō), and his journey to international acclaim with *On the Dramatic Passions II* at the Nancy International Theatre Festival in 1973. Several pages are devoted to *nōh* actors Kanze Hisao and his brother Hideo, inspirations to Suzuki as well as to actors and collaborators in productions.

Chapter 2 begins in 1976 with Suzuki's move from Tokyo to the remote village of Toga, and follows developments through the late 1990s. Carruthers provides information on all company members and an account of the annual "Night Feast" performances during the lean years from 1976 to 1981, prior to the first International Theatre Festival at Toga in 1982. He also recounts Suzuki's lesser-known vital contributions to theatre development within Japan, including his involvement in the Theatre InterAction project, a far-reaching web of activities designed to develop regional theatre in Japan and to gain recognition for "Theatre Studies as an educational subject" in Japan (69).

Chapter 3 is a superb examination of the exercises, called "disciplines" (*kunren*), in Suzuki's training method. Carruthers traces the development of the disciplines between 1976 and 1996 and describes each. Carruthers's training experience in *nōh, kabuki*, and with Suzuki himself, coupled with his observations of Suzuki's rehearsal process in Melbourne, Australia, and Toga, Japan,

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give him an authoritative perspective from which to speak. He corrects common misconceptions about the training that stem from previously published articles, and makes clear how the disciplines are used both as a training tool and in the rehearsal process.

Chapters 4–9 discuss the range of Suzuki's adaptations of classic European texts so as to address contemporary concerns. Suzuki refers to this practice as *honkadōri* (allusive variations), a term that he borrowed from traditional Japanese poetry. Chapter 4, "Adaptations of Japanese Classics," focuses on two works. *Dramatic Passions II* brought Suzuki and star performer Shiraishi Kayoko international acclaim in 1973, while revealing "a new way forward for Japanese stage acting caught in the barbed wire of the great divide between Shingeki and traditional theatre" (115). The second, Kara Jūrō's *John Silver*, was produced in 1996 at Toga, marking Suzuki's return to modern Japanese classics after nearly two decades of foreign classics.

Chapter 5 on *The Trojan Women*—Suzuki's most well-known production and one considered among "the most innovative, spectacular and critically acclaimed . . . in the second half of the 20th century" (125)—is perhaps the most engrossing of the book. Peppered with reviewers' quotes from various performances around the world, Carruthers's scene-by-scene analysis of the play serves to illustrate Suzuki's genius at creating collage dramas. In Chapter 6, Carruthers covers *The Bacchae*, called *Dionysus* in post-1990 versions, discussing these as two basic versions of Suzuki's thirty-one incarnations between 1978 and 2001 of Euripides' classic. Chapter 7 turns to Suzuki's various contextualizations of Chekhov's *Three Sisters, The Cherry Orchard*, and *Uncle Vanya*, focusing on Suzuki's paring away of Chekhov's words in order to focus on the "gap between dream and reality" (181).

The final two chapters follow Suzuki's explorations of Shakespeare. The penultimate focuses on three drastically different "allusive variations" or *honkadori* (125) of *Macbeth*: *Night and the Clock* (1975, Tokyo), *The Chronicle of Macbeth* (1992, Australia), and *Greetings from the Edge of the Earth 1* (1991–2002, Toga). *King Lear*, discussed in the final chapter, differs from most Suzuki productions in that it is not a collage drama, interpolating extraneous texts, but a heavily cut version of the original. Framing it as the fantasy of an old man in a hospital, Takahashi suggests that Suzuki created an "unflinching anatomy of the human psyche" (252).

While Takahashi's death prior to publication limited his participation in the writing, Carruthers acknowledges his coauthor's important contribution of ideas and critiques. The resulting book illustrates why Suzuki "more than any other living Japanese theatre artist has contributed substantially to the modernization and post-modernization of Japanese theatre" (5), while also being thoroughly engaging, utterly readable, and handsomely illustrated. This is a must-have for both scholars and practitioners of contemporary theatre.

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Sails of the Herring Fleet: Essays on Beckett. By Herbert Blau. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004; pp. 214. $22.95 paper.

Reviewed by Spencer Golub, Brown University

Herbert Blau's *Sails of the Herring Fleet: Essays on Beckett* is, in some sense, an inevitable book. Blau has been rehearsing his valedictory for some time, penning eulogies to the art of disappearance that encapsulates his theatre and his life. Is it any wonder then that in his work Blau repeatedly turns to Beckett, his pained and painfully optimistic (now late) friend of some forty years? Anyone who has read Blau's work or heard Blau speak knows about his strategic use of repetition, almost as if he is transcribing the workings of *Godot* in his own hand and in his own time. Blau's hand has always been evident in his elegant writing style, his time(s) now even more visibly generational, in the artists he has influenced and in his abiding taste for the Beckett he knew and whom we all have yet to know.

The titles of Blau's writing about and around the theatre have all been at least vaguely Beckettian with their dubious spectacles and bloody shows, their ontologically sweet nothings-in-themselves ("the materialization of theater from whatever it is it is *not*" [115]), their grave and arduous taking up and performative going(s) on. Blau has seldom summed up but rather consistently if subversively summed forward the ways in which his self-wounding critical eye has looked at Beckett and at what looked back at Beckett, namely the captive audience of the self-examining mind to which a certain practiced blindness cleaves. This is the modus operandi of *Endgame*'s blind Hamm, who is still looking to be looked at, aware that he is what he can never quite see even as he *is* only to the extent that he *is seen.* Blau obsessively thinks about thought as the visible view from inside, the Beckettian seeing-things-into-being in a stage-world that warns us against believing our own eyes. Like any thinking theatrical Hamm, Blau plays the self-referential king of all he desires not to see from the discomfort of his writer-spectator's chair.

This book is less a chronological memoir than a string of events, with the years 1959, 1964, 1992, 1985, 1986, 1989 (thrice), 1996, and 1998 (twice) not quite following and only rarely clumping like gravedigger's dirt or clotting like blooded thought. The strikingly retrospective eventfulness for the reader comes largely from realizing what Blau knew and how presciently he knew it. Blau weighs the gravity of Beckett's vision in hands cracked and bloodied by the dryness of time, by the dust of personal loss that gathers around memoir—his own, Barthes's, and Beckett's (having met both writers in Paris in the same eventful week). Blau assesses the fine mess we have gotten ourselves into by being born into lives lived dying in the light and in the gaze of the despairing spectator, to whom the theatre on a very good day dispenses Chekhovian carrots and Beckettian radishes that slake neither thirst nor fear. Blau the thinker was never confused, or at least never too confused to write about it, even though he could not always be right.

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The memories here are already mostly familiar enough to serve as landmarks—Blau's production of *Godot* inside San Quentin prison, his performance group KRAKEN (which, like its founder Blau, enacted self-theorizing process), and Blau's staging of *Endgame*, which, together with *Godot*, constitute the book's main repast. (Beckett's other dramatic and nondramatic writings are offered mostly as seasoning or as garnish.) There are heartfelt memories of the Actor's Workshop of San Francisco, one of the nation's first "exemplary regional theaters" (56) and of its cofounder and Blau's one-time professional partner, Jules Irving. In all cases, the heart remains very much in the head, and the page, like a (brain)pan, catches the drippings.

Blau lends us his connoisseurship, making the reader believe that he can order Beckett straight off the French menu, that he can knowingly sniff and sample how Beckett's language smells and tastes through its disarmingly austere presentation, both in his writing and in conversation. Together, Beckett and Blau offer a sort of walking-and-talking cure in the same way that a conceptually lucid and personal production of Chekhov does. You hear not just the silences, but the presilences as well. Beckett is abstractly elemental, Blau elementally abstract. Like Didi and Gogo, theirs is a good two-hander act, the one whispering while the other screams. Between them, presence becomes, like Hamm and like theatre, a figure of speech, indicating by veiling "what needs to be hidden" (116).

"The subject of Beckett's idea of theater," writes Blau, "arises from the conjunction of language and the look" (125)—the look that Kafka called "the law" (126). Blau took on Beckett the prescriptive lawmaker, refusing in later years to direct his friend's plays while he was still around to censor the productions, and defending JoAnne Akalaitis in particular and others in principle who dared to interpret the work and not merely reproduce it for the stage. Despite being the master of "the laughing at the laugh" or *risus purus* (125), Beckett found neither his arthritic death grip over his plays' interpretation nor the postmodern trope of the dead author to be in any way ironic or amusing.

In the end, this is a book that listens like Krapp to the sound the past makes while receding into itself, a reservoir in which Blau's own early productions of Beckett have collected and yet from which they have resurfaced from book to book as evidence of a theatrical disappearance that persists as taboo. "Taboo"—the word itself suggests the sound a ghost makes in the dying light of the stage's (self-)regard. Ultimately, the sound that Blau makes looking at Beckett, triumphantly spools rather than pools, wasting not and wanting not. Being who and what we are, we dare not hope for more.

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