

yet too technical for many casual readers. Both parts offer excellent information and a wealth of illustrations and photographs, but ultimately neither is as enjoyable as the story of Collison's career in sound design.



***Violence against Women in Early Modern Performance: Invisible Acts.*** By Kim Solga. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; pp. 248. \$85 cloth.

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Kim Solga's book *Violence against Women in Early Modern Performance: Invisible Acts* is "about violence against women around the turn of the seventeenth century" and its "pernicious erasure in cultural texts of all kinds" (1). With early modern drama as her central preoccupation, Solga asks "how and why does violence against women go so spectacularly missing" at a moment in theatre history "often described as brutally spectacular" (1)? "What role," she asks, "does early modern England's heady performance culture play in the shaping of this central absence, and what legacies does it leave for theatre makers, theatre scholars, and theatregoers working on its remains now?" (1). The book's cover blurb presents her project as "both a history and an ethics," and, in the first chapter, Solga—who suggests that "the work of Shakespeare, Webster, Jonson, Middleton, and others . . . makes a consistent investment in the obvious oppression of women"—poses such questions as: "How do we square this work's enormous cultural capital with its profound distance from contemporary attitudes toward social justice and human rights?" (2).

This book is most interesting for the ways in which Solga relates her central thesis (the cultural invisibility of violence against women) to both the early modern period and contemporary theatre production. "Can we find ways to perform the *history* of [this] elision," she asks, "rather than just repeat [the] elision again and again for fresh spectators?" (4). After an introductory first chapter that lays out her critical and theoretical debts and provides illustrative examples of her thesis through a discussion of Peter Hinton's 2006 Stratford production of *The Duchess of Malfi*, Solga writes, in turn, about *Titus Andronicus*, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, and *The Changeling*. Each chapter deals first with the early modern context of the plays' themes (rape, domestic violence, etc.) and then considers contemporary productions of each of Solga's chosen plays.

To my mind, it is this second aspect of Solga's book that makes it particularly worthy of attention. Solga discusses Deborah Warner's 1987 RSC production of *Titus Andronicus* alongside Julie Taymor's 1999 film version of the play, noting that the latter interpretation "comes closer than Warner's to managing . . . a feminist performance of early modern sexual violence" (56). She also considers Katie Mitchell's 1991 RSC production of *A Woman Killed with*

*Kindness*; Hinton's 2006 *Malfi* at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival; Phyllida Lloyd's 2003 production of the same play for the Royal National Theatre; and Cheek by Jowl's 2006 Barbican production of *The Changeling*. Some of her most illuminating work on these plays comes in her reading of theatre critics' interventions. Solga is aware that the productions she writes about were performed at mainstream venues and, particularly in her discussion of Hinton's *Malfi*, she identifies resistance to the performance among "conservative reviewers" who, in her words, "tend to mirror the majority audience demographic quite precisely" (130). The book's investigation into the constraints placed upon more mainstream theatrical productions, particularly at Stratford, by "theatre tourism," audience expectation and, ultimately, economics, is well made, interesting, and pertinent (see pp. 129–30).

The book's final chapter on *The Changeling* is its strongest, and it is perhaps significant that Solga observes that it was "Beatrice Joanna who first prompted [her] to ask these questions" (142). In this final chapter, the threads of Solga's argument come together as she discusses "the possibility of audience witness" (141). Politicized performance of early modern plays is not enough, she notes, observing that "a parallel gesture of *politicized spectatorship*" is also required, together with "a willingness on our part to be unsettled, to come to terms with the 'difficult knowledge' it imparts about the current shape of our viewing practices" (141–2).

Despite, on occasion, being frustrated by Solga's slightly convoluted prose style, I appreciated this book's unapologetic feminism, and I was convinced by her argument that contemporary productions of early modern plays can often be complicit in reproducing misogynistic stereotypes and systems of thought. The book is driven by issues that are live and persistent, and that have been animating Solga for several years: "These are the questions I have been taking with me, for some time now, to the theatre" (4), she writes in her introductory chapter, and it is clear that she has been teaching, discussing and thinking about them intensely. It is refreshing to read a book that is, in many ways, a call to arms, and that wears its politics overtly.

That said, I have some reservations about this volume. At no point—even when, in her Afterword, she discusses the 2004 film *Stage Beauty*, which takes as its central interest the appearance of actresses on the Restoration stage—does Solga engage the issue that all staged women before the mid-seventeenth century were performed by boys. While admittedly her book's concerns are mainly articulated around contemporary twentieth- and twenty-first century productions of early plays, this overlooked acknowledgment of original staging practices seemed to me glaring. What does it mean for violence against women to be culturally invisible if the vector for that cultural transmission is male? Does this render the invisibility even more profound, or does it open the possibility of other forms of invisibility? What about the invisibility of (sexual) violence against boys and men? These are questions that nagged at me throughout my reading and that remained provokingly unanswered. It is, however, easy for a reviewer to point toward things that a book does not do without fully evaluating the things that it does very well. Solga's project here is fascinating for what it

can tell us about the contemporary performance of early plays and about the negotiations that must still go on when presenting their scenes of violence against women.



*Speaking of the Moor: From “Alcazar” to “Othello.”* By Emily C. Bartels. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008; pp. viii + 252. \$55 cloth, \$22.50 paper.

*Barbarous Play: Race on the English Renaissance Stage.* By Lara Bovilsky. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008; pp. x + 218. \$22.50 paper. doi:10.1017/S0040557411000184

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Kim F. Hall’s highly praised *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Cornell University Press, 1995) was, at the time, regarded as the definitive study of blackness (and whiteness) in literature and portraiture of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. Hall’s work may be situated among the inquiries of G. K. Hunter, Eldred Jones, Elliot H. Tokson, Jack D’Amico, Anthony Barthelemy, Virginia Mason Vaughan, Joyce Green MacDonald, Margo Hendricks, and Ania Loomba, all scholars who have also written about Africans and related Ottomans and Indians. The subsequent interventions of Nabil Matar, Daniel Vitkus, Jonathan Burton, Linda McJannet, and Bernadette Andrea on Islam have furthered our understanding of racial and religious “strangers,” to use the early modern descriptor. The most recent contributions to the dialogue—Emily C. Bartels’s *Speaking of the Moor: From “Alcazar” to “Othello”* and Lara Bovilsky’s *Barbarous Play: Race on the English Renaissance Stage*—prove that in spite of the many outstanding publications on the subject, there is even more to be said on the “Moor.” Although Bartels’s and Bovilsky’s books may appear to share the same topic, they do not necessarily overlap. The use of “early modern” by one and “Renaissance” by the other indicates, as the terms themselves imply, distinct approaches to understanding the Moor.

The Introduction to Bovilsky’s *Barbarous Play* is an astute survey of the typological (versus biological and contemporary) connotations of “black” and “race,” and the rest of the book does not disappoint. Chapters insightfully confront the associations among race, gender, nationality, and religioethnicity in depictions of women, Italians, and Jews from Shakespeare’s *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* to John Webster’s *The White Devil* and *The Poems of Mr. John Milton, both English and Latin, Composed at Several Times*. Bovilsky’s reading of Milton’s appropriation of language in his Italian sonnets is particularly good, but the last chapter, on “Race, Science, and Aversion,” is perhaps the most valuable. Using Thomas Middleton and William Rowley’s torrid tragedy *The Changeling* as a model, Bovilsky dissects the Renaissance period’s “vagaries of