

- 7 Fuchs (2007), p. 198.
- 8 David Roman, 'Comment – Theatre Journals', *Theatre Journal*, 54, 3 (2002), cited in *UiP*, p. 65.
- 9 Including José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Monica Prendergast, 'Utopian Performatives and the Social Imaginary: Toward a New Philosophy of Drama/Theater Education', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 45, 1 (2011), pp. 58–73; Ramon Rivera-Servera, 'Choreographies of Resistance: Latina/o Queer Dance and the Utopian Performative', *Modern Drama*, 47, 2 (2004), pp. 269–89.
- 10 Siân Adiseshiah, *Utopian Drama: In Search of a Genre* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022).
- 11 Dwight Conquergood, 'Performing as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of the Ethnography of Performance', in Petra Kuppers and Gwen Robertson, eds., *The Community Performance Reader* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 57–70.
- 12 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, p. 99.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 99.
- 14 Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 154–5.
- 15 Mariame Kaba, *We Do This 'Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021), p. 26.

New Books

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Real Theatre: Essays in Experience. By Paul Rae. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. xiv + 236. £78.99/\$105 Hb; £26.99/\$34.99 Pb.
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Real Theatre by Paul Rae is aimed at undoing the theatre studies habit of thinking its two titular terms as oppositional. As the introduction puts it, 'The persistent appeal of thinking about theatre in relation to reality remains something of an impediment to recognizing the theatre as real in itself' (pp. 2–3). This is a worthy goal, as almost any idea that has hardened into orthodoxy probably needs shaking up. For a book taking on such a ubiquitous disciplinary habit, the arguments that unfold turn out to be deceptively minute, which is not, as I will explain, a criticism.

To a great extent, *Real Theatre's* thesis is commonsensical: at some level everyone knows that theatre is 'real'. We *know* that theatre performance is made of technologies, of talk, of material bodies and physical things. Making stage magic is some people's ordinary day job. Most theatre is mediocre. And yet defining theatre as precisely that which is not real has a persistent rhetorical use and appeal that has made it an overdetermined reflex of theatre theorists, makers and lovers. This might include me, who has spilled a lot of words on theatricality and how 'real life' is thoroughly saturated with what we might call the fake, the theatrical, or theatre. We, the 'theatre people', like to feel special. So it can feel rather non-interventional to argue for 236 pages that theatre is 'real' in these ways, and maybe even churlish (a word Rae applies to himself before I did here) to take aim at the one sparkle of specialness that theatre maintains. Nevertheless, if I did sometimes yearn for a bigger splash, following the book into those most boring and unexpected corners and musing on them longer for this review pushed me to appreciate the possible applications of this recalibration of 'the real' and/or 'theatre' more.

Over seven chapters in two parts, plus a substantial introduction and short conclusion, 'real theatre' is understood as 'theatre in general, theatre as is, theatre on aggregate, and so on' (p. 211),

and approached through a variety of avenues: in the two chapters of Part One, the key terms are 'reality' and 'experience' respectively. These are endlessly utilized, yet underexamined, notions – that is, they seem to be used as tools while being rarely examined in themselves. In the second part, our newly rearticulated notions of reality and experience are deployed upon an eclectic mix of topics. Can I even call them topics? First comes 'theatre talk', meaning, yes, literally, that theatre-related small talk at the next cocktail party, or coffee shop, or chance hallway encounter and how it comes to constitute a part of the theatre experience itself. The next chapter, 'Peak Performances', works to break down theatre studies' reliance on and bias toward the exceptional, both exceptionally effective or famous productions and the exception of any performance itself when all its accoutrements, rehearsals and the web of necessities that enabled the two hours' traffic of our stage are obscured or disregarded. This chapter dovetails nicely with recent work on mediocre, middle-brow, unrealized and lost performances from authors including Brian Eugenio Herrera, Pannill Camp and Derek Miller. Chapter 5 focuses (this is a pun!) on the 'real' of technical theatre, especially lighting. The next chapter introduces the term 'infratheatre' to account for the moments that are disserved by being lumped in with theatre proper, but might be usefully recognized as 'what theatre is also' (p. 160). And, finally, 'Theatre People' revisits some of the ideas of Marvin Carlson's *The Haunted Stage* in spirit if not through explicit citation, through its focus on how ideas accrue around individuals like Sir Ian McKellen and Harold Pinter in their appearances both on- and 'off-stage. Rae draws on some unexpected interlocutors throughout the book: medical anthropology on atherosclerosis by Annemarie Mol, A. N. Whitehead by way of Manning and Massumi, *Laboratory Life* by Latour and Woolgar, and the history of interior electrification.

Overall, I found this book interestingly difficult to evaluate: if it feels insubstantial due to its attention to the minor, the fleeting, the boring, the ordinary and its resistance to (necessarily) making these Mean Something More Important, then is not that the book succeeding? And if it recalibrates my habits of thought about where theatre is and what tools we might use to think about it, then that is worthwhile, even if (especially if?) those recalibrations are minor.

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Earth Matters on Stage: Ecology and Environment in American Theater. By

Theresa J. May. London and New York: Routledge, 2021. Pp. xvi + 294. £120/
\$160 Hb; £34.99/\$44.95 Pb.

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The burgeoning crisis in the ecology has motivated theatre scholars and practitioners over the last three decades to significantly respond to it through their works, which may be seen to have proliferated from Una Chaudhuri's (1994) pioneering call for theatre to 'play a role' in creating a profound 'transvaluation' required to address the crisis (p. 25). Erika Munk's essay 'A Beginning and End' (1994) also highlighted the need for theatre scholarship to combine historical and ecological perspectives – 'a vast open field with histories to be rewritten, styles to rediscuss, contexts to re-perceive' (p. 5). Theresa J. May's book *Earth Matters on Stage: Ecology and Environment in American Theater* appropriates both these calls by engaging with a critical discourse on ecological theatre, which she calls 'ecodramaturgy'.

As there has been no major focus on American theatre history through an ecological lens apart from Downing Cless's essay 'Eco-theatre, USA: The Grassroots Is Greener' (1996), *Earth Matters* stands to be the first and only of its kind, signposting the necessity for such inclusive and exhaustive study in other cultural contexts. Divided into seven chapters, an Introduction,