

careful commitment to this subject, and that the result will be of tremendous value to both students and scholars of women's theatre and performance for years to come.

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A Race So Different: Performance and Law in Asian America. By Joshua Takano Chambers-Letson. New York and London: NYU Press, 2013; pp. xiii + 266, 30 illustrations. \$85 cloth, \$26 paper, \$22.10 e-book.

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In Joshua Chambers-Letson's award-winning book, *A Race So Different: Performance and Law in Asian America*, "the law's realization is inextricable from the performance of law" (2). This performative dictum and the juridical scenario of the United States versus Asian Americans are fundamental for understanding the regulation of US racial exception and Asian American subjectivity in the long twentieth century. Chambers-Letson argues that the terms of (mis)recognition and (de)legitimation of Asian American rights and identities, whether found in legal or popular cultural encounters, are at once reiterable and changeable through a dialectic of "social structure and cultural representation" (4, quoting Omi and Winant). However, maintaining the assumptions of this dialectic as opposing forces is ultimately untenable, since the law and performance aesthetics bleed into each other. Reading the book with this setup in mind tests the limits of causation between law or performance and its specific effects or enactments. It points to the complex coconstitution of the law, a form of "embodied art," and actual performance and theatre, which serve simultaneously as the law's agents and critics (19). One way to think about this paradox is through the function of performance as the law's aesthetic proxy (turning "legal performatives into embodied realities" [14]) and disruptive force ("the body disrupts the interpellative trajectory of the law in order to posit and present other alternatives" [14]).

As a result of Chambers-Letson's masterful staging, the law is not pitted against aesthetics or vice versa. Instead, the book brings the two together as fungible entities in the history of Asian American racialization. In so doing, it yields some startling insights about how the slippages of this complex give way to what Chambers-Letson describes (citing Shoshana Felman's term for art) as "the language of infinity" (22; vs. law, which Felman calls "a language of abbreviation"), while enabling new treatments of racial injustice. Tellingly, the book's organization narrates the juridical architecture of Asian difference up front only to have it evidently disappear into everyday life. Much of the historical and theoretical overview is found in the superb introduction, which would be of interest to anyone exploring the intersection of law, performance, and racial performativity; it provides a persuasive gambit, an opening statement in court. To extend the metaphor, each subsequent chapter begins with a legal case history that haunts the reading of Asian American cultural productions, objects, and texts. These cases are selected

from myriad examples in which US law is at once in force and suspended for Asian Americans perceived as security threats or forever foreigners.

Crucially, the shifting contiguities of performance and the law are examined not as a methodological innovation but as an epistemic necessity. In unsettling the line between aesthetics and the law, the book foregrounds how the blurry interplay of juridical performativity and processes of racialization is itself unsettling, and demands a wide array of legal cases, objects, stagings, and scenes to locate Asian America on the nation's carceral geographies, imperialist histories, and orientalist fantasies. From a familiar opera classic (*Madame Butterfly*), to intercultural theatre (*Chinoiserie*), carceral performance (Japanese American concentration camp), visual culture (Shimada scrapbook of such a camp), and sonic spectacle (Cambodian American indie-rock), the book shows how Asian American performance practices in the United States are imbricated in legal struggles and racist paradigms. But this is not a hopeless proposition. Like the postulation of utopian futurities by queer theorist José Muñoz, the performability of law in these instances goes hand in hand with the enactment of possibilities. As Chambers-Letson sees it: “[p]erformance at its best, by insisting on and demonstrating that *something better* is possible, verifies that this possibility can in fact become a reality” (24).

Readers looking for a teachable text on *Madame Butterfly* need look no further than the first chapter in the book, where *Butterfly*'s performance histories and cognate texts—from John Luther Long's novella (1898), David Belasco's theatrical adaptation on Broadway (1900), and Puccini's opera at the Metropolitan Opera (1907) to statements by Supreme Court justices and legal scholars—are closely examined. With remarkable historical depth, it shows how the law and performance are coconstitutive in the transmission and codification of orientalist racialization for Asians and Asian Americans. Creatively structured like a play with different acts and scenes, the chapter demonstrates, through copious archival and performance analysis, the insidious transfusion into the cultural vernacular of a racialized fantasy with historic and contemporary legal ramifications.

The effect of this transfusion is a curious “national amnesia” (66), a point where fact and fiction intersect around “Asian immigrants and Asian Americans from the nineteenth century to the present [who] have often been drawn into the regulative sphere of US law at the very moment that its protections and assurances are suspended” (13). This forgetting and fictionalization of Asian suffering is a form of systemic violation with specific histories in Chinese America as well as Japanese America. In the second chapter, on Ping Chong's *Chinoiserie*, these histories are brought to bear on “the continuum of comparative racialization, settler colonialism, and US empire” (85). Notably, the reparative conscience of this chapter and the next two, on Japanese American concentration camps, is borne by Asian mothers and women—Su Zhen Chen, Lily Chin, “Mary,” “L.A. girls”—whose affect and bodily postures are inscribed with the violence of racial subjugation and surveillance. Their salience comes through even in Chapter 4, devoted ostensibly to the Moriyuki Shimada Scrapbook. The centrality of female figures continues in the fifth and final chapter, where the biography of Chhom Nimol, the lead female singer of Cambodian American indie-rock band Dengue Fever, weaves through official discourses of racial performativity (“illegal immigrant”

[175], “depressed Cambodian” [194]) in the context of US transnational wars and imperial amnesia.

A Race So Different adroitly combines an illuminating study of juridical code, performance theory, and histories of racialization to produce a national and transnational understanding of the Asian American body politic. Its rich and compelling analyses, which use clear and precise language drawn from different disciplines, will make the book indispensable for research and teaching in a wide variety of fields, including theatre history, performance studies, Asian American studies, sound studies, visual studies, critical race studies, and Asian cultural studies.

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Performance, Identity, and Immigration Law: A Theatre of Undocumentedness.

By Gad Guterman. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014; pp. viii + 236. \$90 cloth, \$90 e-book.

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It is striking how few book-length studies there are on the relationship between theatre and undocumented immigration. The act of crossing an international border, particularly for undocumented people, generates a number of high-stakes performances involving interactions with border patrol agents and immigration officials as well as fellow migrants and possibly smugglers—all of which require the construction of specific narratives and embodied performances of identity. Undocumented immigration has long been one of the most divisive topics in the public arena, sparking such nativist legislation as California’s Prop 187 (1994) and Arizona’s SB 1070 (2010) as well as other forms of control at the federal level such as the Immigration Reform and Control Act (1986) and Barack Obama’s recent executive order on immigration (2014). And, as Gad Guterman shows in his compelling book *Performance, Identity, and Immigration Law: A Theatre of Undocumentedness*, there is no shortage of theatre productions that dramatize undocumented border crossings and their effects on individuals and families. This book seeks to contribute to the void of critical studies on this topic, and it does so with abundance and precision. It is at once encyclopedic in the number of plays it cites—this alone makes it a valuable work of scholarship—and simultaneously nuanced and richly detailed in its analyses of those plays. This is a vital book for anyone interested in the relationships among theatre, American legal history, and immigration.

Guterman examines how undocumented immigrants to the United States have been represented through American theatre in plays produced from the early 1970s to the present day. Each chapter focuses on one of four broad themes: border crossings, labor, family life, and criminalization. While the book mostly considers undocumented immigration from south of the US border, it also