

discussion to include a wide range of dramatic forms and performance, from the seventeenth century to the present. Pilkington presents his audience with a convincing challenge to expand its definition of Irish theatre to include practices and events such as mumming, wake games, and theatre riots, as well as prison protests and hunger strikes.

Although all of the discussions Pilkington launches in *Theatre & Ireland* are interesting, there are a few standouts, such as his examination of the H-Block prison protests as counterpublic performances of resistance. Pilkington writes about the “dirty protest,” during which prisoners, after suffering repeated beatings by prison guards, opted not to use the lavatories and showers, and instead smeared their cell walls with their own excrement. He frames the protests as the “ironic performance of brutality” (62), and relates them to the work of American performance artists Annie Sprinkle, Tim Miller, and Karen Finley.

Occasionally, I wished Pilkington had developed his ideas a bit further, although I suspect his failure to do so is more the result of the short form of the books in the Theatre& series than of his own writing and research style. Nevertheless, with *Theatre & Ireland* Pilkington asks us to consider questions pertinent not only to Irish theatre, but also to our reflections on the enormous economic, social, and political changes that have occurred in Ireland in just the past few decades. This short, significant book reminds us to remember the consequences (and political potential) of Irish theatre and performance across multiple platforms.

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The Japan of Pure Invention: Gilbert and Sullivan’s “The Mikado.”

By Josephine Lee. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2010; pp. xxiv + 248, 25 illustrations. \$75.00 cloth, \$25.00 paper.

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The Japan of Pure Invention: Gilbert and Sullivan’s “The Mikado” by Josephine Lee charts the multiple and varied racial fantasies performed in this long-lasting comic opera, as staged in productions in England, the United States, and Asia. This book spans over a century’s worth of cross-racial performance, though it defies linear tracking, as Lee convincingly situates *The Mikado* as an ideal subject for the analysis of orientalist representations and practices. Productions of the opera, says Lee, offer an “opportunity to examine complexity, distinctiveness, and mutability of racial construction over time and across space” (xiv). Lee broadens the racial imaginary of what has constituted transatlantic performance studies with her vibrant study, challenging a field that has been predominantly preoccupied with Europe, the Americas, and Africa. Recently, scholars have begun expanding the sites of black transatlantic performance studies to include the geographies of island nations; among these are Sujatha Fernandes’s

writings on global hip-hop, and Jill Lane's *Blackface Cuba, 1840–1895* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005). Lee's book continues this important work. *The Japan of Pure Invention* also provides an invigorating analysis of the relationship of Asian American theatre artists to the ongoing practices of yellow-face, racial exclusion, and other forms of orientalism on and off the stage.

Animating Lee's work is a question with which *The Mikado* has always contended: that of authenticity. Can *The Mikado* be evaluated and made accountable for its representation of real Japanese people and culture? Many have answered no to this query, arguing that *The Mikado* largely reveals Victorian England and its oriental fetish; however, Lee's book does not let the conversation end there. By focusing on the opera's racial history, she asserts the responsibility *The Mikado* bears toward Japanese people and Japanese culture (145).

The book is organized into three parts. Part I, "1885," comprises three chapters focusing on the opera's debut. A central premise binds these first three chapters together: that *The Mikado* and the craze it generated in its initial emergence relied on the 'thingification'—the link between race and commodity fetishism—of Japan and its people. Lee analyzes the opera's beginnings alongside the popular obsession for Japanese objects, arts, costumes, and crafts known as *japonaiserie*. In Chapter 2, Lee explores the relationship between *The Mikado* and the Japanese Native Villages in Knightsbridge and in Boston, built in the same year Gilbert and Sullivan's opera premiered. Lee's third chapter analyzes several films that cinematically interpret the legacy of *The Mikado*. Most compelling in these chapters is Lee's side-by-side look at the Japanese Villages and the opera, as she argues that *The Mikado* had to negotiate the threat of the presence of the "authentic" upon which it drew (40). Like other colonial projects combining entertainment, education, and anthropological findings for public consumption, the Japanese Native Villages and the opera worked in tandem to construct a sense of Japan while keeping a safe distance from it through the disappearance of material labor performed by Japanese (or any other racialized) bodies.

In Part II, "1938–39," Lee confronts the intimate connection between blackface and yellowface in productions such as *The Swing Mikado* and *The Hot Mikado*. Lee argues, in looking at these performances, that orientalism is not simply a binary opposition between white and Asian, and that yellowface is not a practice that can be solely attributed to white people. The key question for the two chapters in this section is how we are to read black performances of yellowface. Black *Mikado* productions embodied African Americans' talent and dignity and their desire for racial uplift. Yet these productions also highlighted that the white performing body is the only acting body truly afforded the possibility of disappearing into a role.

The book's Part III, "Contemporary *Mikados*," discusses contemporary productions of the opera to underscore "many kinds of racial imaginings" (xix). In these final three chapters, Lee foregrounds the 1990 Pomona College protests against *The Mikado*, using objection as a basis from which to segue into the numerous ways theatre artists have addressed, confronted, and deconstructed the opera's racist constitution. Included in these chapters are analyses of postmodern productions, such as one directed by Peter Sellars and employing the 1980s

U.S.–Japan economic duel in its staging. Part III also provides interpretations of *The Mikado* as a repository of racist caricatures, citing post-1980s productions, including one directed by Brian MacDonald and staged for the Stratford Festival in Ontario and the Virginia Theater in New York (155–6).

It is also in this part of the book that Lee discusses various Asian American theatres' stagings of the opera. Are Asian American *Mikado* performers performing yellowface? Lee examines the severe underrepresentation of Asian Americans in American theatre; for Asian American artists working to establish viable theatre careers, playing a role in a classic show like *The Mikado* increases their professional value. But, as Lee also notes, some Asian American artists have approached their participation in this opera as the righting of a wrong. For example, Lodestone Theatre Ensemble's 2007 take on the opera, *The Mikado Project*, "becomes an opportunity for revising the opera so that it speaks to the possibilities of new meanings even within these old and well-worn roles" (186). Lee's reading here is especially poignant given the recent report by the Asian American Performers Action Coalition citing the dearth of ethnic representation on New York City stages.

Lee's concluding chapter, "*The Mikado* in Japan," details the varied and complex reactions to Japanese performers inhabiting these roles. Productions of *The Mikado* in Japan, she argues, generate recognition of Japanese performers' abilities and foster national pride. Japanese audiences also identify the opera's inaccuracies. One reviewer of the 1887 Yokohama production, for example, noted that "the names of the characters are nonsensical" (217). This mixture of responses, Lee maintains, "indicate[s] a critical awareness of the power of the opera to misrepresent Japan" (216).

Josephine Lee's *The Japan of Pure Invention* is thorough and insightful, an inspired approach to the study of a theatre classic. Its focus on *The Mikado*'s racial history brings into relief what it means to look at and to recognize race and racism in theatre in a transnational context. Lee's book shows that unburdening the stage of its imperial and racist histories remains an important undertaking, and holds out imaginative possibilities for the institution and practice of theatre.

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Champagne Charlie and Pretty Jemima: Variety Theater in the Nineteenth Century. By Gillian M. Rodger. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010; pp. xiv + 296, 23 photographs. \$80.00 cloth, \$28.00 paper. doi:10.1017/S0040557412000324

Reviewed by Nicole Berkin, City University of New York Graduate Center

In keeping with the growing scholarly interest in popular culture over the past thirty years, Gillian M. Rodger's *Champagne Charlie and Pretty Jemima: Variety Theater in the Nineteenth Century* explores the miscellaneous amusements known as variety that were "aimed almost exclusively at a working-class