

BOOK REVIEWS

JEFFREY D. MASON, BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine. By Marvin Carlson. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002; pp. 216. \$47.50 cloth.

Reviewed by Thomas Postlewait, The Ohio State University

The tradition of Western drama has its ghosts, from the spectral characters of Darius in *The Persians* and Clytemnestra in *The Eumenides* to the attending ghost in *The Spanish Tragedy* and the ghostly voice in the “all grey” room of Beckett’s *Ghost Trio*. In turn, some non-Western traditions of theatre, such as Japanese *noh*, insist upon the primacy of ghosts, whose stories are recounted on stage. Perhaps, from the perspective of our modern world, such characters are anomalous devices of the theatre. Yet Marvin Carlson insists in *The Haunted Stage* that we understand them as emblematic signs of how all drama and theatre are organized and experienced.

Each theatrical work, event, and experience, no matter how new or original it may be, recycles aspects of our individual and cultural memories. Accordingly, all plays and performances, excepting the very first drama and theatrical production (which we cannot recover), have embedded within them a repository of ghostly presences. Equally important, our experience of attending and watching theatre carries a necessary component of what Carlson calls “ghosting,” the recognition of something we have encountered before in a play, performer, production, or performance place, although we process this recycled experience somewhat differently within the new context. He explains, “Thus, a recognition not of similarity, as in genre, but of identity becomes a part of the reception process, with results that can complicate this process considerably” (7).

Most obviously, these ghostly conditions are true for any play, performer, or production in relation to the traditions of theatre. No one writes, acts, designs, directs, produces, or observes in a vacuum, as if for the first time, so the ghosts of the past, as Carlson illustrates in great detail, appear in many different guises: (1) the retelling of stories, proverbs, folk tales, legends, myths, and historical events; (2) direct and indirect quotation of passages from previous plays; (3) intertextual references, tropes, and structural elements; (4) the generic traditions and their rules; (5) the functions of parody, irony, and burlesque in drama; (6) the training of actors in types of character, specific roles, and particular gestures and modes of delivery; (7) the re-enactment of certain roles and plays; (8) the revival of plays, musicals, operas, pantomimes, and all other kinds of works in any repertory process; (9) the recycling of costumes, properties, and scenery in production; (10) the shared codes that define period styles and our ability to recognize them; (11) the recurring patterns that determine the history of theatre spaces and buildings; and (12) our return to any of these works, players, productions, spaces, buildings, and festivals for the

experience of theatre. In all of these cases, each theatrical work, event, and experience carries a ghostly presence of what went before.

Given, then, that theatre is a kind of “memory machine,” Carlson is interested in “not only . . . what is being performed (or, better, performed again) but also . . . the means of performances” (7). His argument is thus quite expansive: “Everything in the theatre, the bodies, the materials utilized, the language, the space itself, is now and has always been haunted, and that haunting has been an essential part of the theatre’s meaning to and reception by its audiences in all times and all places” (15). In order to demonstrate these assertions, Carlson organizes the book into five topical sections following an introduction on the basic issues and concepts: the dramatic text and its physical realization in the theatre; the actor’s body, presented in role after role as well as recurring types of role; the production elements, including costumes and scenery (Chapter 4); the places where performances occur; and the postmodernist practice of pastiche and citation, with a focus on The Wooster Group.

Throughout the book, Carlson considers the ways that audiences experience drama and theatre, so his study is a major contribution to the task of constructing theatre audiences. His strategy here is to write as both a historian and a theorist, providing a rich and various perspective on a wide range of plays and performances. Given the ubiquitous nature of ghosting, which is our common experience and heritage, this book is in danger of becoming a theory of everything—the answer to the semiotic challenge of describing the elements of theatre. All theatre experiences get cataloged as examples of ghosting. Also, as Carlson recognizes, this study necessarily tells us something we have always known, but perhaps not quite articulated in a systematic or comprehensive manner. In this sense, the book offers up an uncanny engagement with the familiar and the strange. After reading Carlson, we are condemned to spectral possession, not simply by another presence but by ourselves: a ghostly *doppelgänger* attends us, and an ancient mariner clutches our clothes as he recounts his memories, which become ours.

More intriguingly, we are made aware of just how much Carlson himself has experienced theatre in this way. Part of the real pleasure in reading this book resides in the historical specificity of Carlson’s descriptions, especially as he draws upon his own memories. Everybody participates in ghosting, but Carlson attends theatre, on average, several times a week—week after week, month after month, year after year, decade after decade, in dozens of countries from the United States and France to India and Egypt. He has been in most of the national theatre buildings of the world, so he has communed with the ghosts that occupy the Comédie-Française, the Moscow Art Theatre, and the Vienna Burgtheater. He has watched theatre in thousands of proscenium theatre buildings and in fields open to the sky. He has also sat and stood in warehouses, old schoolrooms, transformed railway stations, cabarets, living rooms, and tents, haunted by avant-garde drama, performance art, and circus acts. For

postmodern performance he is the ideal spectator, as he registers the art of citation, pastiche, and fragment in each ghostly spectacle. His memory is haunted by thousands of plays, thousands of performers, thousands of directors' concepts, thousands of set and costume designs, and thousands of theatre buildings of every conceivable shape and ambiance. Unlike most of us, Carlson seems to remember every moment.

Of course, in this process he has seen many plays and performers repeatedly, and he has returned often to many theatre spaces in dozens of cities. Many of us have run into him at this or that theatre, not only in New York or London but in Oslo, Riga, and elsewhere. Even when he is not among us, his ghostly presence attends almost any theatre space that we might visit. He has seen what we have seen and what we have not seen; he is our companion and our surrogate spectator. How fitting, then, that he writes a book about being haunted by theatre. The memory machine, in this case, is Carlson himself. He is our collective memory. At these moments the book achieves a special historical quality. In the process, we then get a suggestion of the kind of autobiography that Marvin Carlson might write—a book to be desired: the *Wizard of Theatrical Memory*, from Kansas to the World.



Agitated States: Performance in the American Theater of Cruelty. By Anthony Kubiak. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002; pp. xii + 239. \$55 cloth.

Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic. By Terry Eagleton. London: Blackwell, 2003; xvii + 328. \$24.95 paper.

Reviewed by David Krasner, Yale University

Anthony Kubiak's *Agitated States* and Terry Eagleton's *Sweet Violence* share several themes, in particular the analysis of dramas of violence as well as the ethics of tragedy in everyday life. Their points of view, however, differ. Whereas Kubiak takes a poststructural stance by examining the contrast between the actual event and its artistic representation (in both fiction and reality), Eagleton posits a recuperation of tragedy's moral and aesthetic value. Taken together, the books provide an enlightening and varying perspective on violence, loss, and tragedy in theatre and drama.

Kubiak's work examines the development of American culture as both theatre and a Puritanical repudiation of that theatricality. His study relies heavily on French poststructuralist theorists such as Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, Blanchot, Bataille, Deleuze, Guattari, and especially Artaud and Lacan. For Kubiak, the theatricality of violence as articulated by Artaud's theatre of cruelty and Lacan's psychoanalysis manifests itself in America's love-hate compulsion with the spectacle of bloody theatrics. The Timothy McVeigh case, the O. J.

Simpson trial, and the news reporting of the Columbine High School shooting, for example, are symptomatic of America's desire to see events as theatre, while simultaneously attesting to a Puritanical revulsion to displays of theatricality.

The book also sheds light on specific texts in order to trace the progression of violence, theatrics, and antitheatricality from the Puritans to the modern era. Drawing from examples of what he calls "a standard anthology of 'best' (i.e., most critically acclaimed) American plays and literature," Kubiak analyzes those dramas "that have been judged—rightly or wrongly—as 'typically American'" (12). While he carefully scrutinizes many representative plays, missing are "typically American" dramatic works of such playwrights as Arthur Miller, Lillian Hellman, Tennessee Williams, August Wilson, John Guare, David Mamet, Maria Irene Fornes, David Henry Hwang, Paula Vogel, and others, which one would take to be essential to his undertaking.

The book is best when it sticks to dramas and novels. He considers Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* and Anna Cora Mowatt's *Fashion* in light of "authenticity," describing the protagonist of Mowatt's play, Trueman, as "the guardian of the authentic, the preserver of presence and true presence" (72). Though Kubiak extends his critical mapping of America through *Rip Van Winkle* (Joseph Jefferson's version), Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon*, James Herne's *Margaret Fleming*, and Melville's *Moby-Dick*, some of the sharpest analyses occur in the book's last two sections. There is a concise examination of the works of O'Neill, Albee, and Shepard, linked by the image of the "lost child" in *Desire under the Elms*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, and *Buried Child*. Kubiak also offers important observations concerning late-twentieth-century performance art, dissociative identity disorder, trauma, Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, and Suzan-Lori Parks's *The America Play*.

Kubiak repeats the well-worn chestnuts of postmodernism: that American identity "is the absent center within which our still unrealized history exists" (89); that "seeing is 'always already' a crisis state" (97); that mimesis "is 'always already' undone by difference" (98); that realism is "an empty signifier" (101); that the "'thing not there' is the meaning, the *phantasmic* meaning, that accrues to an empty space" (111); that traditional Euro-American theatre is "deeply embedded in this aesthetic of pain and fear" (167); and so on. His doctrinaire style and poststructuralist methodology can be vexing, especially for anyone with an animus toward French theory. Kubiak's book, however, is serious, having many illuminating things to say about American theatre, and all readers will learn from his treatment of violence. Still, many will remain numbed (even put off) by the book's opacity, which sometimes buries its most important themes under layers of wozy syntax. Nevertheless, despite its occasionally infelicitous jargon, the book is admirable in its ambitious attempt to link violence and American theatricality.

In contrast to Kubiak's postmodern skepticism of the real, Terry Eagleton's superb book focuses on tragic theories in Western literature, the consequences of

violent events, and the ethics of suffering and catastrophe. Eagleton's encyclopedic study consults numerous philosophical works, including those of Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Marx, Sartre, Georg Lukács, A. C. Bradley, George Steiner, Raymond Williams, and Walter Benjamin, as well as plays and novels by Shakespeare, Goethe, Ibsen, Strindberg, Kafka, Beckett, D. H. Lawrence, Thomas Hardy, García Lorca, Thomas Mann, Tennessee Williams, and Henry James. According to Eagleton, tragedy contains multiple meanings: "a cultural signifier, a theodicy, a majestic Idea, a fertile source of ultimate value and form of counter-Enlightenment, an artistic resolution of philosophical dualities" (17). Eagleton, to his credit, is dissatisfied with a miasmatic view of tragedy. His examination considers in detail the nobility engendered by agony, the heroics of suffering, the contrast between fate and justice, the pleasures of pity and fear, and the idea of the tragic in relation to modernism.

Tragedy matters, says Eagleton, because it "humiliatingly exposes the limits of our powers, but in thus objectifying our finitude makes us aware of an unfathomable freedom within ourselves" (122). He realizes that suffering does not necessarily yield a better person; still, in observing dramas of death, disaster, and unhappiness, tragedy "grants us opportunities for such an encounter in imaginative and thus non-injurious terms" (36). In considering Aristotelian and Shakespearean "classical" tragedies, we are said to observe "men and women chastised by the Law for their illicit desire, a censure which with admirable economy satisfies our sense of justice, our respect for authority and our impulse to sadism" (176). The mixture of art, voyeurism, and sympathy for the protagonist while knowing justice is served are the multiple and paradoxical attractions of tragedy. However, for modernity, tragedy is now cloaked in the existential fear of others. From "August Strindberg onwards," he says, "relationship is now tragic in itself," because to exercise your freedom might lead to potentially damaging "someone else" (22).

Although Eagleton fails to provide a great deal that is new, the book produces marvelous insights into the nature of drama. His analysis of Beckett, which applies as easily to Chekhov or any of a number of modern dramatists, maintains that Beckett's world—very much a posttragic one—"is populated by those who fall below the tragic, those who fluff their big moment, fail to rise to their dramatic occasions, cannot quite summon up the rhetoric to ham successfully and are too drained and depleted to engage in colourful theatrical combat" (67). Eagleton appears to be stating the obvious when he asserts that in the modern age democratization has limited the idea of tragedy; since we are no longer giants, our disasters have diminished their reverberation on others. Egalitarianism has leveled the playing field, nullifying the downward "tragic fall." Nonetheless, his humanist Marxism and commitment to social justice prevents Eagleton from giving up entirely on the tragic in modern life. He admires characters that challenge the status quo and embrace "a gloomy existential allure about the idea of going down fighting" (103). To be sure,

Eagleton rejects simpleminded martyrdom and feckless utopianism, while simultaneously acknowledging tragedy's evolution. The idea of tragedy has changed owing primarily to modernity's rift between the secular and the sacred.

Eagleton's concluding chapter takes aim at postmodern skepticism and its rejection of tragic aesthetics. Left-wing academics, he claims, have all but jettisoned tragedy's progressive desires for a better world. In their valuation of "the abject and marginal," the left has been slow to recognize the "role in the building of a new social order, one based this time on the Real, on a mutual confession of finitude and frailty, rather than on fantasies of self-fashioning and endless pliability" (287–88). For Eagleton, the notion of the "Real"—contra the postmodernist claim that the real is amorphous, rhetorical, and illusionary—still possesses virtue. He sardonically notes that the "fluidity and unfoundedness" defended by academic postmodernists "are not usually as pleasant for migrants as they are for professors. Not all diversity is by any means positive" (63). Eagleton regards the social-democratic ideas of pluralism and pragmatism as lukewarm, contributing little to social progress. Despite their differing outlooks, the violent and tragic dramas and events examined by Kubiak and Eagleton present a disturbing vision of the past and a profound warning of things to come.



Theatre/Archaeology. By Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks. London and New York: Routledge, 2001; pp. 215. \$27.95 paper.

Reviewed by Gay McAuley, University of Sydney

Mike Pearson studied archaeology and then spent twenty-five years in physical theatre and site-based performance, notably as founder-director of Brith Gof, while Michael Shanks is an archaeologist, specializing in the classical period and attempting to rethink the bases of his discipline. Together they have written a wonderfully evocative book, tracing the evolving dialogue between them as they explored what each discipline had to offer the other, leading eventually to the elaboration of the common project they call "theatre/archaeology." They describe "theatre/archaeology" as "an interdisciplinary and hybrid focus on the textures of social and cultural experience; the means and materials of forging cultural ecologies or milieux that attend to that contemporary tension between the global and the local; how we model the event of this cultural production, the weaving of connections through such indeterminate times and places" (xvii). The book is a fascinating intermingling of different narratives (artistic, intellectual, autobiographical) and discourses (scholarly, polemical, visionary), and it begins at the end, which is of course a new beginning, with the outline of the academic programs that have emerged from their interdisciplinary collaboration: Mike Pearson's course in performance studies in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies at the

University of Wales, Aberystwyth, and Michael Shanks's interdepartmental Archaeology Center at Stanford University in California.

The short introduction is a collage of first-person narrative fragments in which the authors recount the intellectual and artistic trajectories that have given rise to the shared project, and the rest of the book comprises three chapters, entitled, somewhat confusingly, Theatre Archaeology, Theatre and Archaeology, and Theatre/Archaeology. The confusion is not simply due to the complexity of the relations between the two terms but also to the choice of the word "theatre" at all, when, throughout the book, theatre is posited as the dominant form against which Mike Pearson defines his own artistic practice. In the first chapter, each author maintains his own disciplinary perspective, but in a jointly written summary they propose terms, concepts, and practices that can be borrowed from one discipline to rethink theories and methods in the other. Mike Pearson's section includes moving evocations of performance from the performer's perspective through which he deals with ideas about space, place, bodies, events, and the relation between witness and protagonist, and some brilliantly insightful theoretical observations concerning site-specific performance. Michael Shanks also moves from a first-person account of "doing" archaeology (an excavation in Sicily) to observations about the history of the discipline and his notion of archaeology as a mode of cultural production that is concerned as much with the present as the past it seeks to illuminate.

The second chapter deals with issues arising from the coming together of performance practice and archaeology: first, a critique of re-enactments and reconstructions in heritage and museum sites, contrasted with the practices of a site-specific performance group like Brith Gof, and second, consideration of the performance implications of certain sites, hypothesizing for example from the material traces of Neolithic tombs to what mortuary rituals might have been enacted there. The third chapter brings the two disciplines together to constitute what the authors refer to as a "blurred genre" (the reference here should surely be Clifford Geertz rather than David Gregory) and describe as "an integrated approach to recording, writing and illustrating the material past" (131). The chapter exemplifies some of the new and different ways of telling as well as modes of documentation that come from the merging of the two disciplines, such as the account of Brith Gof's production *Esgair Fraith*, which is here intercut with fragments from other performance works and theoretical reflections concerning landscape, walking, deep maps, and life worlds. The second instance of the blurred genre is an edited version of "Deep Maps," a multimedia performed lecture devised and performed by the authors on several occasions and designed to evoke *Esgair Fraith*, the abandoned farm swallowed up in a major reforestation project forty years previously and the site of the Brith Gof performance. The authors juxtapose analysis of Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," Edgar Allan Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue," crime reports and biographical sketches of David Davies (the last owner of *Esgair Fraith*) and of Mike Pearson's grandmother and great-

grandfather. This assemblage of fragments is their way of “telling an archaeology,” and its intent is not postmodern chic but to “make something of our contemporary historicity, our sense of time passing and pasts left in the present, our historical agency in the worlds we inhabit and look upon” (187).

I approach this book as a theatre specialist with a particular interest in space and place and a keen awareness of the need to develop methods of documentation and analysis of performance, so I therefore leave aside the question of its contribution to the theory and practice of archaeology. With regard to theatre and performance studies, however, the authors provide brilliant insights into the practice of site-specific performance, and their book makes a major contribution to the discipline of performance studies through its elaboration of concepts such as the deep map, the sensorium, second-order performance as a mode of performance documentation, and more generally, in the seriousness with which it addresses the task of documenting performance. My only reservation is that Mike Pearson’s insistence on setting performance against theatre creates a kind of blind spot in relation to theatre practice. For instance, is it true that in “orthodox, narrative theatre” the script “provide[s] the ‘center’ or ‘datum’ around which other materials are working” (112); this may be the case from the perspective of the producers of the performance, but it is not so obviously true for the spectators, who respond in the moment to gestures, looks, proxemic relations, and tone of voice at least as much as to things said, and who certainly have a more vivid recall of the former than the latter. The kind of documentation provided by a deep map is surely needed for productions of “orthodox, narrative theatre” as much as for devised performance, unless it is claimed that performance in the theatre is merely a pictorial illustration of what is fully present in the text. I mention this reservation here more as evidence of the thought-provoking nature of the book than as a criticism, for in this exemplary account of a brilliant and imaginative cross-disciplinary collaboration, Pearson and Shanks have provided analytical concepts and an intellectual framework that can be applied to many different performance genres.



Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre. By Gay McAuley. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000; pp. 320. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewed by Doug Rosson, Florida State University

In the current scholarly discussion, many disciplines usurp the word “performance” to represent the postmodern idea of discursive creation through repetition (iteration). In an attempt to demarcate the boundaries of theatre studies, to reclaim performance as a “theatrical act,” many theatre scholars argue that a theatrical frame designates theatrical performance. This idea of frame may often be distilled into a spatial relationship between actor(s) and audience. To further this theory, many have written metaphorically about theatrical space;

however, in her important new book, Gay McAuley addresses the idea of a theatrical space directly, discussing architecture, spatial structure, actor space, and audience space. She argues that theatre requires not only “liveness” and the presence of both performer and spectator but also the space where those presences meet. That “lived space” must be added to the first two aspects and examined as a basic element of the theatrical act. Thus McAuley seeks “to explore the multiple functions of this spatial reality in the construction and communication of theatrical meaning” (4).

In each chapter of *Space in Performance*, McAuley uses one or more of the constitutive qualities of “space” to examine a different aspect of the theatrical event. Chapter Two dissects the architecture of theatres’ physical spaces. Using both traditional and nontraditional examples, McAuley investigates how the design (or the found nature) of audience and actor areas affect the dynamics of performance. She then discusses the stage itself during performance, what she calls the “Energized Space” (90), beginning with what she defines as an analysis of “the semiotic functions performed by the actors’ bodies in space” (120), which looks at the use of the different facets of an actor’s instrument to signify text. In an interesting twist, McAuley begins a stimulating discussion of the idea of presence and the insubstantiality of performance. Here, space begins to take on another trait—as a medium through which emotional energy may be channeled.

Chapter Four deals with the structuring of performance, and again the idea of space takes on another trait, this time the aspect of temporality. In this chapter, McAuley develops a detailed theory of performance structure that incorporates many levels of organization—from the single intermission to the actors’ and directors’ bits, beats, and units—into a coherent and understandable whole. She also discusses objects, those things other than bodies that take up space on the stage, and the significance they acquire simply through appearance as well as the difficulty posed by problems of actuality. Chapter Six investigates ideas of space in written dramatic texts, not simply dialogic referents, but stage directions and the placement of words via sound in space: “the verbal is always situated in relation to the visual” (214).

In her final chapter, McAuley proposes her theories of spectatorship, which are also intrinsically linked to space and the presence of actors and audience within that space. To this presence she adds these further attributes, “the complex play of fiction and reality, the equally complex play of looks between performers and spectators and between spectators, the multiple frames that enable this complexity to be experienced and the freedom for the individual spectator to foreground one frame or another at different moments and to construct his or her own sequence of events and signs” (274), which completes an interesting and well-argued model.

McAuley’s methodological approach is as varied as her subjects of examination. She brings to bear not only an impressive fluidity with semiotic

and phenomenological theory, but also her personal experiences as an audience member and as an observer/ethnographer in rehearsal halls in Sydney, Australia. This combination gives her work credibility with both academics and theatre artists. Many performers will enjoy her actor-based approach for text analysis highlighted in the chapter concerning structure as well as her insistence on considering the actor as coauthor of performance.

Space in Performance left me wanting more. McAuley deals with such a wide range of topics that the scope of the work did not permit her to discuss all of them thoroughly. I was especially interested in her discussion of space and presence, which she covered only in passing. However, that brevity demonstrates how much scholarly work there is to do critically analyzing aspects of the theatrical space as well as the primacy of space in discussing the theatrical frame.



Performing Democracy: International Perspectives on Urban Community-Based Performance. Edited by Susan C. Haedicke and Tobin Nellhaus. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001; pp. ix + 340. \$24.50 paper.

Reviewed by Ann Larabee, Michigan State University

Performing Democracy sets out to explain the energetic growth of diverse community-based theatre, to explore its various approaches and challenges, and to promote its sustainability. The impressive range and sheer number of projects discussed in these twenty-three essays make the book a valuable introduction to what editors Susan C. Haedicke and Tobin Nellhaus see as an international movement to “involve, mobilize, and politicize” audiences (1).

The editors do not give a prescriptive definition of community-based theatre, seeing it as a loose set of related activities emphasizing the participation of audiences in shaping text and performance. Several essays refer to Brazilian director Augusto Boal’s forum theatre that sought to encourage audiences to political activism through participation and collective reflection, and the book also recognizes Paulo Freire’s “pedagogy of the oppressed,” which encourages critical thinking toward social change. The three sections of *Performing Democracy* suggest an evolutionary process: defining community, dealing with procedural questions of authority, and, finally, empowering audiences. But as some of the contributors note, the relationship between audiences and artists does not necessarily create utopian community. One of the volume’s most intriguing themes is the degree to which professional theatre practitioners may create conflicts when they impose their own ideas on their participating audiences, who may have little writing or acting ability. As Laura Wiley and David Feiner point out in their essay, “Making a Scene: Representational Authority and a Community-Centered Process of Script Development,” critical questions revolve around who has the right and the power to represent whom.

Since all of the authors in *Performing Democracy* are intimately involved in community-based projects, there is a tendency to valorize these projects rather than engage in self-critique and theoretical examination. The authors seldom interrogate their institutional settings, managerial language, or patently accepted words like “empowerment.” Still, the project descriptions are often fascinating enough in themselves. For example, Carl Thelin contributes a discussion of People’s Public Space (PPS), an art cooperative in Taichung, Taiwan. PPS’s happenings commemorate the life of Mr. Lin, a homeless man who had disappeared from the cooperative space, leaving boxes of abandoned artifacts, like old shoes, that he had collected from around the city. The cooperative created *Mr. Lin’s Secret Treasure*, in which participants passed around these objects and shared memories of Mr. Lin’s life. The treatment of Mr. Lin as an artist rather than a homeless crank makes PPS, in Thelin’s view, “a genuinely revolutionary entity” (86). Marcia Blumberg describes a more overtly interventionist project, Puppets in Prison, an AIDS-education workshop in a Johannesburg prison. Each of the twelve participating prisoners developed a puppet character, one of them a gay prisoner in drag called “Sharon Stone,” who spoke in several of South Africa’s languages. Such creations, Blumberg suggests, “expose displacements of race, gender, and sexual orientation” that need to be socially addressed (260). Susan Suntree’s FrogWorks company brings together environmental activists and actors to save the Ballona wetlands in Los Angeles; in their confrontational street performances, one of the characters is a frog that is “ritually garroted” and resurrected as an angel, able to stop the destruction of its habitat (246). Mary Ann Hunter describes the Hereford Sisters, an offshoot of Brisbane’s Backbone Youth Arts, who set out to make the city’s skateboarding spaces safe and welcoming for girls. Envisioning *Skate Girl Space* as a “wild west” drama, the young women entered the park as “a skateboarding posse ready to pioneer and explore new territory,” staging confrontation with “Sheriff Stiffy,” who represented male domination of public space (331).

There are several essays that place such activities in a broader theoretical context that explores the meaning of community, rejecting utopian claims of spiritual transcendence and political consensus. Most notably, in “Approaching the ‘Structure of Feeling’ in Grassroots Theater,” Bruce McConachie traces a grassroots theatre production of *Walk Together Children*, based on local, personal stories concerning the history of race relations in Williamsburg, Virginia. McConachie describes the problems that arose with his cross-racial casting, as he attempted to “complicate the local (and national) understanding of race” and to emphasize its social construction (31). The cast had to negotiate questions of authenticity, appropriation, and convention in representing race. Through the lens of this production, McConachie features the conflicts and ambiguities inherent in imagining an ideal, inclusive, and undifferentiated community that transcends racism and other inequalities. Similarly, Diane M. Nudd, Kristina Schriver, and Terry Galloway discuss the destabilizing gender performances of the lesbian company Mickee Faust Club. They argue, “It is

through performance that we acknowledge the multiplicity, the otherness, of ourselves” (115). Alan Filewod’s essay, “Coalitions of Resistance: Ground Zero’s Community Mobilization,” also takes on the problems of sentimentalized community, arguing that such visions often erase class. Performances of resistance based on class, he writes, cannot be subsumed into any essentializing identity politics because they are rooted in historically contingent and shifting economic contexts.

Diane Taylor’s essay on performance community and local history, “Yuyachkani: Remembering Community,” explores the intersections of subjectivity, memory, and trauma. Taylor works with the Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani in Peru, a theatre collective made up mostly of white, Spanish-speaking urban professionals who attempt to enact the “social memory” of mestizo and indigenous communities. Once again, questions arise regarding the ethics of appropriating and impersonating these communities, but Taylor sees social memory as “mutually constituting historical and cultural processes,” in which the work of forgetting may be as crucial as remembering (312). Thus, Yuyachkani stages suppressed moments of political violence, such as a mass murder in Ayacucho in 1968, recreating spaces of mourning and witness.

Few would argue against *Performing Democracy*’s optimistic egalitarian goals for community-based theatre and its audiences. However, the strength of the volume lies in the way it complicates identity and community and presents diverse, wide-ranging projects that do not always succeed. Thus, the volume should appeal not only to practitioners and promoters of community-based theatre but to cultural theorists who are interested in power, performance, representation, and authenticity.



Fangs of Malice: Hypocrisy, Sincerity, & Acting. By Matthew H. Wikander. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002. \$32.95 cloth.

Reviewed by David Krasner, Yale University

In this invigorating analysis, Matthew H. Wikander weaves together themes of hypocrisy and sincerity in acting, plays, criticisms, and antitheatrical theories. At issue is how critiques of theatre, termed “antitheatricalism,” have used differing and even contradictory approaches to acting and performance. According to Wikander, there are fundamentally three kinds of antitheatrical critic. First are those who, following Plato, admonish theatre’s pretense and its association with play-acting, immorality, and deception. Next are those contemporary critics, particularly new historicists and feminists, who claim that all human action is merely a social performance, “with its attendant inability to distinguish hypocritical from sincere performance.” To such scholars,

performing onstage is merely a facade, since acting is little more than an imitation of social constructs. Finally, there are the critics who, following Rousseau, “cherish sincerity and prize inner self” (xix). Such critics dismiss theatre and performance as shameful exhibitionism. From this perspective, those who believe in human volition and the presence of an essential, inner sincerity believe also that presenting the private self onstage is reprehensible. Wikander stakes out a “middle ground” between the theatrical and the antitheatrical, asking: “must we throw out the baby of sincerity with the bathwater of antitheatricalism?” (xix–xx). Wikander’s analysis traverses several selected moments of theatre history in consideration of the “problem of identifying acting as hypocrisy and stigmatizing actors as hypocrites,” as well as examining “the idea of slanders against actors, slanders that particularly privilege the value of sincerity and set it in opposition to performance of all kinds” (xxi).

The book divides into three parts (or three “acts,” as Wikander calls them), each section corresponding to a social stigma associated with acting: dressing up, lying, and imbibing. Costuming, dishonesty, and drinking alcohol are three human actions often linked with theatricality, especially by moralists and critics of the theatre, and Wikander makes the most of these connections. In Part I, “They Dress Up,” he examines three themes related to cross-dressing and dandyism: the professional status of “boy actresses” on the Elizabethan stage through the lens of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*; Jeremy Collier’s *A Short View* as it pertains both to Molière’s *Tartuffe* and the high moral piety of the Restoration period; and the evolving characterization of fops, dandies, and cross-dressers from the late seventeenth century into the eighteenth century. Wikander raises the point that the Elizabethan “boy-actresses” provoked cultural anxiety, creating resistance to theatre by moralists less concerned with the transvestite image of boy-actresses than with the fact that boy-actresses were simply actors who, like all actors, practiced deception. An actor, says Wikander, could evoke panic among antitheatricalists at the time because of the “actor’s reputation for duplicity and hypocrisy” (17). Wikander extends his argument, comparing the virulent antitheatricalism of Elizabethans Philip Stubbes and William Prynne with feminist and new historicists who collapse “role into self,” nullify identity, and claim “actresses to be commodities.” These contemporary critics, he further alleges, endorse an antitheatricalism that “often relies upon analysts like Stubbes and Prynne for guidance” (23). Such sweeping and provocative observations punctuate the book.

In Part II, “They Lie,” Wikander analyzes four moments in theatre when issues of honesty are prevalent: Rousseau’s insistence that theatre undermines sincerity, the complication of lying and deceit in the character of Joseph Surface in Sheridan’s *School for Scandal*, Ibsen’s *Hedda Gabler* as a metaphor for a protagonist trapped in a melodramatic farce, and the performance of Shakespearean kings. Wikander considers Rousseau’s views as prototypical of

the modern “cult of sincerity,” and he argues that Rousseau objected to Molière’s plays, especially *The Misanthrope*, because they held up sincerity to ridicule. Wikander further asserts that the actress playing Hedda is simultaneously trapped by theatrical conventions (the fourth wall, for instance) as well as confined by her fictive circumstances. Furthermore, in *Hedda Gabler*, the “possibility that Hedda might lack a self, that an actor might lack a self—that social performance might so structure it that we all lack selves—is a fear which draws much of its energy from antitheatricalism” (99). The section concludes with a comparison of the film performances of *Henry V* by Laurence Olivier and Kenneth Branagh.

Wikander begins Part III by asserting that ever since “its association with Dionysus, acting has always been seen as a kind of intoxication, and the preachers and moralists who despised theatre in the early modern period also railed against alehouses and against drink” (125). Throughout this section, the author maintains that drinking is frequently identifiable with wasteful behavior. The indolence of drink and the pretense of acting provide the background for Wikander’s examination of Shakespeare’s taverns, Mr. Hardcastle’s old Liberty Hall house in *She Stoops to Conquer*, and finally the notorious Harry Hope saloon in Eugene O’Neill’s *The Iceman Cometh*.

This work is impressive not only for its commonsense argument and encyclopedic breadth, but also owing to Wikander’s sharp eye for theatricality’s inherent conflicts. Occasionally he makes sweeping generalizations that collapse under close scrutiny, as when he claims that the lengthy rehearsal process integral to modern performance would be anathema to actors of the past (especially David Garrick), who seemed “to have managed quite well despite what looks to modern eyes like utterly insufficient time to prepare” (193). Wikander ignores the influence of both Freudian and Jungian psychoanalyses on modern acting techniques, which helped create the need for psychological “pauses” in the modern dramas of Chekhov, Beckett, and Pinter, and the need for actors to rehearse filling them. He also fails to consider the rise of the modern director as a guiding force who requires more rehearsal time to prepare and fulfill production demands. All of these considerations were beyond the scope and necessity of Garrick and his contemporaries. In addition, Wikander’s enthusiasm occasionally rushes his argument forward without sufficiently clarifying the plays, critics, characters, and sometimes subject matter under discussion. Nevertheless, such caveats may appear nitpicking, considering the boldness and thoughtfulness of the book as a whole. “Dressing up, lying, and drinking,” Wikander says in summing up, “reflect aspects of performance that leach into social life and then find their way back into performance” (198). With acuity, *Fangs of Malice*, along with Martin Puchner’s recent book, *Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-Theatricality and Drama*, will set the stage for the debate on theatricality and antitheatricalism for years to come.



Greek and Roman Actors: Aspects of an Ancient Profession. Edited by Pat Easterling and Edith Hall. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; pp. xxxi + 510. \$90 cloth.

Reviewed by David Wiles, University of London

The art of acting is hard enough to describe when it is in our midst. In view of the difficulties, we in theatre studies usually make our lives easier by assuming that opera and ballet are the property of other disciplines. Consider the problems, then, of dealing with this broad topic across a thousand years of history and the whole Mediterranean world, when we have but a handful of references in treatises devoted to rhetoric or poetry, some paintings of scenes (reinterpretations of originals) and other equally problematic forms of iconography, models of masks but not the actual objects worn, playtexts often in the form of fragments (lacking stage directions but sometimes accompanied by bookish commentaries), some puzzling scraps of musical notation, a set of inscriptions, and precious little more, with nothing faintly resembling a treatise on acting. Without attempting an overview, Easterling and Hall have gathered together twenty essays under three headings: the art of the actor, the professional world, the idea of the actor. Each essay is a rigorous attempt to salvage something of substance from the wreckage.

As a collective enterprise reflecting the work of an English scholarly community, supported by contributions from Greece, Australia, and North America, the work taken as a whole seems to be driven less by a passion for the experience of theatre than by a desire to understand the performative and shifting nature of ancient texts. There is much engagement with Aristotle and the orators, but no attempt to find a paradigm in gladiators, charioteers, or others who once put their bodies on display in a ludic context. One driving force behind the enterprise is clearly a concern with reception and the relativity of meaning. Another is a shift of focus from classical Athens to antiquity at large: in our present globalized world, perhaps the intimate male democracy of classical Athens has ceased to be a meaningful utopia.

Hall opens the section on the art of the actor with a sparkling essay on the actor's function as a singer, ranging across antiquity and embracing questions of rehearsal and ideology. She demonstrates what could be done with other aspects of the actor's art such as gesture, costume, and mask. Her essay on song is backed up by Peter Wilson's informative study of the *aulos*-player. The core of this section seems to revolve around Aristotle's suggestive remark that the late-classical actor Kallipides was described as an ape by his traditionalist rival. Eric Csapo identifies ideological nuances bound up in the debate about realism, Richard Green surveys the iconography for clues, and Eric Handley looks at realism in dialogue. The contributors to this section are all Hellenists, and the

Roman actor gets little attention. The balance is more even in the next section on the profession, where Jane Lightfoot's essay on the Greek actors' guilds is balanced by Peter G. McC. Brown's essay on the organization of actors in republican Rome. The rest of this section is concerned with the syncretic practices of later antiquity. Ruth Webb, for example, deftly gathers together the evidence on female performers. In the third section, on the idea of the actor, Pat Easterling marshals a fascinating set of unfamiliar anecdotes in order to discuss the iconic status of the ancient actor. The focus is again Greek, and neither she nor anyone else addresses the fundamental question of why Greeks held the acting profession in higher esteem than Romans did. Elaine Fantham makes a useful comparison of acting and oratory in the Roman world. The most challenging essay in this section, to my taste, was Catherine Edwards's study of "acting and self-actualization in imperial Rome." She examines how the Stoic philosophers sought to live life as theatre, thus taking the debate out of the narrow terrain of theatre into the broader field of performance studies, and indicating why theatre mattered so much in the ancient world. She indicates how theatre related to basic "who am I?" questions at a level deeper than anything contained in an authorial script.

The essays do not offer an overview of the subject, but they provide the basis for a debate to begin. There are obvious omissions: no one attempts to show how the actor function separated out from the writer function, or to tabulate different social and generic categories of actor. Charles Garton's celebrated essay on Roscius (1972) is often mentioned with approval, but none of the present contributors makes a similar imaginative leap into seeing the world from the actor's point of view. Nevertheless, these essays do create solid islands of scholarship that allow debate to begin. This is a topic that requires members of different disciplines to interact: Romanists to talk to Hellenists, historians to talk to language-based cultural theorists, and of course classicists to talk to mainstream theatre historians who have addressed the same problems in other contexts. The compartmentalized structures of academia do not encourage such dialogue, so Hall and Easterling have done a valuable service in placing the subject of acting on the agenda, helping to break down the old securities that lie in saying, "this is what the text means." They have made it possible to embark on what I would see as the interesting work ahead, namely to understand why ancient audiences were so interested in watching and listening to actors.



Modern Greek Theatre: A Quest for Hellenism. By Stratos Constantinidis. Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland & Company, 2001; pp. 197. \$34.95 paper.

Reviewed by Savas Patsalidis, Aristotle University

For those of us who write about modern Greek theatre the major problem is not to prove its value but to find ways to let others know about it, which

primarily requires overcoming the language barrier. Since most of the plays written in Greek are never translated into English or any other “major” language that would attract widespread critical attention, most often we are forced to write for two audiences: the local specialist and the non-Greek generalist. For the first, we tend to narrow down the focus to the point where the generalist who lacks the background necessary to engage with unknown texts is lost. When we write for the generalist, we open up the lens too much to appeal to the local specialist. This dilemma characterizes Stratos Constantinidis’s *Modern Greek Theatre: A Quest for Hellenism*, a study that tries to balance the author’s scholarly ambitions on the one hand (to write a new account of modern Greek theatre) and the demands of his readers on the other for something more general that does not cram in names, dates, and titles.

Like many contemporary theatre historians and critics, Constantinidis seems to be more interested in theatre history as a site within the landscape of a cultural geography than as a “parade” of texts and dates. He discusses plays and authors but also problems of race, class, gender, ideology, classicism, and colonialism and how they impinge on the making of local theatre history. It is obvious that his reading does not aim at foregrounding a homogeneous narrative but rather, through the study of gaps, crossings, and nonlinear narratives, at bringing forward different linkages and new alignments that would throw into doubt those narratives that went into the shaping of the course and nature of Greek drama and of culture in general.

What surfaces as a unifying principle is Constantinidis’s concern to give more visibility to women dramatists whose contribution to “shaping the consciousness or conscience of Greek men and women about their national identity” he considers significant. To this end, he selects three plays written by Evanthia Kairi, Kalliroi Siganou-Parren, and Loula Anagnostaki, which he analyzes in terms of their social and aesthetic significance and compares to better-known plays written by Greek and non-Greek male dramatists who were their contemporaries (4). The intervening chapters “provide connections and comparisons with a representative group of plays written by Greek male playwrights who dramatized similar issues—from sexual abstinence as a means of preserving racial or ethnic identity to conceptual permutations of Hellenism during intense nation building or national crises” (4).

In the first chapter, Constantinidis discusses *Nikiratos*, by Evanthia Kairi, the first play by a woman playwright written during the War of Independence from the Ottoman Empire (1826). To justify its inclusion, he claims that it is the first theatrical attempt to represent the connection between culture and nationhood, with the siege of Missolonghi providing the framework. The play becomes a symbol “of the besieged situation of the Greek nation” (46), and the protagonist, *Nikiratos*, provides an example for the rest of the Greeks to imitate. Constantinidis goes on to argue that this play is also “one of the earliest Greek dramatic responses to European colonialists who presented the Greeks as people

of an inferior culture.” To substantiate his claim, he isolates and briefly discusses Shelley’s *Hellas* to show the different understandings of basic terms that went into the making of national identity in the 1820s and to argue that Shelley’s and Byron’s colonial discourse constituted an imaginary Greece to serve their imperialist idealism.

In the second chapter, Constantinidis looks into the ways the newly established monarchy tried to change linguistic and cultural norms to fit its own Western concept of “nationhood” and identity, an attempt that Dimitrios Hatziaslanis satirizes in his play, *Babel* (1836), which, according to Constantinidis, is an important document since it “forecasts changing attitudes and reflects some aspects of colonial thinking that delayed cultural, economic, and political emancipation in the kingdom” (72).

The following chapter turns to Siganou-Parren’s *The New Woman* (1907), which belongs to a group of plays that appeared in the nation-states of Europe and the United States of America from approximately 1878 to 1914. This happens to be the first play in Greek theatre history that reflects on gender issues as well the importance of antiquity, which, according to Siganou-Parren, should not be taken for granted; to have any value at all, it ought to be revived to reflect the new reality. *The New Woman*, Constantinidis concludes, “rekindles the liberal ideas of the Greek Revolution for the emancipation and equality of Greek men and women” (90).

The fourth chapter covers the period right after the Asia Minor War (1922). Analyzing the dramatic work of Nikos Kazantzakis, Angelos Sikelianos, and Costis Palamas, Constantinidis argues that these artists attempted to alter the theory, if not the practice, of Greek theatre. Looking for what they thought was a more genuine aesthetic and humanistic experience, they disregarded the prevailing norms of realism and opted for imagination, poetry, dreams, mysticism, and generally the inner world of people and things (116–17), all constituent parts of a (utopian) answer to the conflicts, the feelings of alienation, and polarization among Greeks. As Constantinidis claims, the protest one encounters in their plays is more Dionysiac, close to the idea of the Nietzschean “superman” that brought home a new definition of selfhood.

The closing chapter focuses on the Greek society of the 1970s that also marked the end of Greek modernity. Now Greek drama is even more interiorized and self-interested. It embarks on an “existentialist” and “absurdist” quest beautifully mirrored in Loula Anagnostaki’s play *The Victory* (1978), where contrary to what the title of the play claims, no one emerges victorious in the end.

Constantinidis arranges his material in chronological order to enable the reader to see both the gradual development of local theatre and the intellectual and sociocultural milieu of Greece, a parallel reading that he encourages early in

the book when he states that the male and female characters he discusses are symptoms of social rather than biological causes and that they remain unfulfilled “because of identity politics and national crises.”

Although I do understand Constantinidis’s claim that the study of Greek drama has for too long been in the hands of philologists and that is about time it was opened up to let in more sociocultural and other factors, I think he takes on a mammoth task that cannot be adequately covered within two hundred pages. As a result, things are left out, and links are missing that take away from the book’s otherwise coherent design. A number of sweeping statements create wrong impressions; on page 23, for example, Constantinidis claims that the more the Greeks neglect local live theatre, the less eager the various Greek governments become to subsidize theatre companies. This is not true, since in the “years of postmodernity” the number of theatre productions has more than tripled (partly due to the increase in the number of theatregoers), as has the number of subsidized companies. It suffices to say that Athens alone has now more than 160 professional stages that house over 350 productions a year.

Furthermore, Constantinidis’s decision to read modern Greek theatre through the study of a very limited number of plays is a risky option that can easily backfire since not that many people (if any) would agree with the credit he gives to some of these playwrights, who are not even included in any standard theatre history.

My few objections aside, this is an engaging, imaginative, welcome resource of particular value to those who are concerned with modern Greek theatre as such but also to those concerned with more general and much debated issues like nationhood, selfhood, colonialism, and so on. The book does not stretch past the 1980s, but the preface hints that more will come. And we are eager to see what follows from an author obviously in love and in close contact with his subject.



Leading Creators of Twentieth-Century Czech Theatre. By Jarka M. Burian. London and New York: Routledge, 2002; pp. 225. \$95 cloth.

Reviewed by Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz, University of British Columbia

When surveying books on Czech theatre on a library shelf, one is likely to be surprised to see how many there are. After all, the Czechs form a small nation—ten million all in all—whose independence, before the vast tides of twentieth-century history swept over it in 1939, lasted no more than two decades. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that for this nation the strong bond between theatre and politics has lasted since the dawn of its literature in the eighteenth century. It seems something of a miracle that by 1920, two years after the

creation of an independent Czechoslovakia, its theatre found itself in the mainstream of modern European drama and that it moved, within the next twenty years, into the avant-garde of its contemporaries. Against this briefly sketched background in his introduction, Jarka M. Burian pitches his discussions of the creative artists whose work raised international awareness of their nation's theatre and, above all, that "other," nonverbal language of the stage: scenography.

K. H. Hilar, the chief director and pioneering intellect of Prague's two largest Czech theatres between 1910 and 1935, represented the ideal of the autonomous, innovative director who liberated theatre from the rigid forms and the psychological realism of the past century by rhythmically orchestrating all components of a play. The cabaretlike, vastly popular reviews of Jiri Voskovec's and Jan Werich's *Liberated Theatre* brilliantly reflected the lively critical spirit of a generation watching the dark clouds of fascism gather over Europe. E. F. Burian found inspiration in two diametrically opposed sources: music and Marxism. His chief innovation was the *Theatrograph* system of integrated lighting, projections, and live action, and his dual commitment to art and a programmed social system resulted in destructive psychological difficulties when he was forced to accept the official aesthetic of socialist realism. Still, his influence on later directors was considerable, and his theatre became synonymous with the socially engaged avant-garde throughout Europe.

Alfred Radok, the most creative director of the postwar era, integrated filmed sequences into the action on stage and let objects speak for themselves, becoming a harbinger of "postmodern theatricalism" (62) and leading to the renowned *Laterna Magika* whose success at Expo 58 prompted Czech authorities to institutionalize it as a showcase for Czech culture and society. Otomar Krejca's remarkable career led him from being an actor in provincial towns to becoming the predominant Czech director despite the fact that he was not permitted to direct in any Czech theatre during the period of "normalization" from 1975 to 1990. By merging all stage elements, he achieved a "sustained choreographed dynamism," including the use of masks as a powerful component (83).

Burian's chapter on the world-renowned scenographer Josef Svoboda analyzes his so-called kinetic stage, including sophisticated lighting and projection techniques, and his use of mirrors and multiple screens in folk comedies, realistic contemporary plays, and Wagnerian operas. Some of Svoboda's productions, especially those done with Krejca as director, have become icons of creative scenography. His film-stage symbiosis meant the imaginative interplay of space, time, movement and light.

Burian is able to build a strong argument partly because he attended many of the productions during his repeated visits to Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic over many years, and because he was personally acquainted with several of the artists. The book offers many illustrations, some of them production photographs that Burian himself took. He employs a

politicohistorical perspective that is unobtrusive yet poignant in its understated precision—recording, for example, E. F. Burian’s Marxism shaken by the news of the Moscow trials in the midthirties, Radok’s decision to leave the country that bore tragic memories of the deaths of his family members and his own struggles on the murky battle ground of politics and art, and Svoboda’s frustrating attempts to resist the stultifying system from within his scenography.

Chapter Ten, “Czech Hamlets of the Twentieth Century,” though quite revealing in itself, should be more closely integrated into the text. Although it provides “a special view of the collaborative work of . . . actors, directors and designers” (168), the reader looks in vain for a deeper assessment of how Shakespeare’s perennial figure subtly changes meaning as time goes by, and how theatre artists attempt to convey this. The final chapter, on Václav Havel, does not really belong in this volume. Although Havel has written a great deal about the theatre and his voice is repeatedly heard in the text, he would have to be brought in more fully as a playwright/commentator and possibly as one who molded a philosophy of the theatre. However, this chapter’s discussion of his plays disturbs the volume’s unity.



In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today. By Aleks Sierz. London: Faber & Faber, 2000; pp. 274. \$17 paper.

Reviewed by Kyna Hamill, Tufts University

One of the more original developments in contemporary theatre at the end of the twentieth century was the reactionary mode of playwriting to emerge from Britain’s younger generation. London and Edinburgh audiences, particularly, saw some of the most groundbreaking and influential movements in British theatre to be produced since John Osborne’s provocative debut of *Look Back in Anger* in 1956. In *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today*, Aleks Sierz contemplates the theatrical debuts of many young writers and the artistic contributions by directors, designers, and actors involved in each of their often scandalous new works. The brazen portrayals of violence including rape, murder, and incest as well as drug abuse, homosexuality, and the ruthless use of language made for a controversial new mode of writing. The young playwrights who brought these appallingly poetic stories to the stage were simultaneously reacting to the post-Thatcher, postconsumer, cultural climate of the 1980s and locating the theatre as an uncensored medium for which to write. The plays form an aggressive, provocative, sometimes obscene, and usually highly entertaining corpus that Sierz situates as one of the most influential theatre movements of the late twentieth century.

Sierz begins by attempting to explain the idiom “in-yer-face.” Noting that the term originated from American sports journalism in the midseventies, he

points out how the label “in-yer-face” has become part of the theatrical vernacular and that London critics commonly utilize it as a means of separating the provocative from the truly shocking. His own definition, “drama that takes the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it until it gets the message” (4), describes the visceral quality of waking an audience from its habitual theatregoing experience. Sierz’s authority as a theatre critic gives the book an interesting perspective as he thoughtfully unveils each new work within the changing culture of British theatre. He explains how this new style of writing burst upon the stages of the Royal Court and Bush Theatres in London and The Traverse in Edinburgh, among others, as a response to the lack of plays speaking to a younger generation of audiences. Sierz succeeds in defining the idiom, but he has more trouble defining the progression of this new theatre. His attempt at a “brief history of provocation” occasionally reads like “shock theatre for beginners,” and Sierz makes broad and unsupported statements that conflate many confrontational theatrical movements of the past. It is not until his discussion of provocative, post-1956 London theatre that his argument begins to take shape. Despite these setbacks, Sierz is correct in asserting that this new style of writing warrants a study of the culture that changed the style of British playwriting in the 1990s.

Sierz assesses the literary value of some of the most “in-yer-face” plays of the 1990s and assembles excerpts from the reactionary newspaper critiques that accompanied each debut as a “series of frontline reports” (xi). Many London critics reveled during this period, not only because there was such innovative and notorious theatre being produced, but because plays such as Sarah’s Kane’s *Blasted* were so controversial that the story of its production made front-page news and pushed theatre criticism into the limelight. As a theatre critic himself, Sierz draws attention to the positive and negative impacts of theatre criticism during this period, and he rightly points out the faults of such critical interpretation during a period of theatrical renewal. Sierz includes selected excerpts of interviews by the playwrights on their work, some extracted from print interviews, other he carried out with the writers himself. Sierz includes a chapter-by-chapter bibliography of these potentially useful interviews and criticisms, but he does not cite each quotation, making it difficult to trace some of the very thought-provoking quotations he utilizes.

Sierz boldly rates the top three plays in his study as Kane’s *Blasted*, Mark Ravenhill’s *Shopping and Fucking*, and Anthony Nelson’s *The Penetrator*. He also discusses the many other writers that emerged with a bang in the 1990s, including Martin McDonagh, Phyllis Nagy, Patrick Marber, Jez Butterworth, and Naomi Wallace (an American), to name only a few. Sierz explores the writing and theatricality of plays in thematic chapters covering the changing face of British theatre in “Come to the Shock-Fest,” the crisis of masculinity in “Boys Together,” the clash between men and women in “Sex Wars,” and over-the-top violence in “Battered and Bruised.” Sierz introduces the plays that made critics and audiences sit up and notice these writers, and he discusses each writer’s

body of work. He also effectively analyzes how many of these playwrights influenced each other and shows how this brash new style became the norm in playwriting.

As one of the first books to discuss this very influential movement of playwriting in Britain, Sierz's work provides a valuable starting point. His treatment of the current repertoire of "in-yer-face" writing is wide-ranging and could serve as a resource for actors and directors looking to discover new plays. However, there is still room to pursue more thoroughly the development of this movement in British writing. Two analogous paradigms are the Jacobean drama and the films of Quentin Tarantino. Sierz uses "Jacobean" as a descriptive of "in-yer-face" drama far too often without defining what he means, and he cites many critics and directors who make reference to the "Tarantino effect" on several of the writers without further exploring the analogy. Sierz includes no analysis of the intriguing connection between the language and violence of the Jacobean stage and the films of Tarantino, and of the influence each may have had on their younger generation of playwrights and audiences—all of which might provide a topic suitable for an "in-yer-face" play.



Alan Ayckbourn: Grinning at the Edge. By Paul Allen. New York: Continuum Books, 2002; pp. x + 337. \$35 cloth.

Reviewed by Duncan Wu, Oxford University

Alan Ayckbourn is one of the more successful—and undervalued—British playwrights to have emerged in the postwar period. As a director, not only of his own work but of others' (Arthur Miller described his production of *A View from the Bridge* as definitive), he has proved himself a sure-sighted man of the theatre. Paul Allen's biography begins with his upbringing by his mother—his parents separated shortly after his birth—and takes us up to the triumphant performances of *House* and *Garden*, the two plays presented concurrently in real time with the same casts at the National Theatre in London in 2000.

This is an authorized volume in the sense that Allen's principal sources are Ayckbourn and his wife, Heather Stoney, the guardian of a comprehensive archive of research materials. In addition, Allen has sought out actors and colleagues whose insights he frequently quotes. The result is an authoritative, well-informed, and admirably even-handed assessment of the man and his work. It offers a portrait of a profoundly gifted man—generous, completely dedicated to his work and much respected by his peers, though inclined to be unemotional, self-absorbed, and nonconfrontational. It reveals more than we have previously seen of Ayckbourn's insecurities and anxieties, as when he remarks that "It is alarming, but the more one writes, the less confident one becomes" (144).

Although the book begins as biography, it soon turns into an account of Ayckbourn's career, intended less for those with a hunger for showbiz gossip than for those interested, in practical and intellectual ways, in the work. Admirers of his plays will find much useful material here: how he approaches the challenge of staging plays in the round, how he casts actors, and how he deals with practical tasks as a director, such as when he got a boat and river onto the stage for his production of *Way Upstream*.

The tendency to underrate Ayckbourn is related to the fact that he's often thought of as a comic writer, but Allen's account of the plays confirms that comedy in Ayckbourn can be dark, and that much of his work (comic or not) is serious in its preoccupations. *A Chorus of Disapproval* and *A Small Family Business* were searing indictments of Thatcherism, political plays to rival anything by Howard Brenton or David Hare. He is also, of course, a very English writer. Meditating on Ayckbourn's comparative lack of appeal in the United States, Allen points out that American audiences are "bewildered by the British interest in people who are identified as failures" (143)—and Ayckbourn's protagonists can be calamitous in that respect. Extending that observation, Allen quotes the French actress Zabou Breitman as remarking that "the French are suspicious of serious plays which are also funny and the English are suspicious of serious plays which are not. The French like art with an idea in the foreground" (274–75).

Ayckbourn is also English in his influences. Pinter is a presence strongly felt in his work—and Ayckbourn vividly recollects his experience as a young actor in the second production of *The Birthday Party*, shortly after the play first flopped in London. At first, Ayckbourn confesses, it "was absolute gobbledygook to me," and when he asked its author about Stanley's background, Pinter replied, "Mind your own bloody business. Just say the lines" (77, 78). Allen reminds us that Ayckbourn has been compared with Coward and Travers; I doubt that they influenced him as much as some claim, but all three are practical men of the theatre. Ayckbourn isn't an intellectual, and it comes as little surprise to find that he has never seen a production of anything by Brecht (64). That's not to say that his plays are without intellectual content, but it is to emphasize the essential pragmatism, of a peculiarly British kind, in which his work is rooted.

This book does need a bibliography—it lacks even a complete listing of Ayckbourn's plays—and while it contains much of interest to those working in theatre, anyone looking for practical insights might be better advised to turn to Ayckbourn's *The Crafty Art of Playmaking* (London: Faber & Faber, 2002). My principal reservation about Allen as a biographer is that his search for analogies between life and work can lead to some crude observations, as when, in a caption to a photograph, he says that "the few years in which [Ayckbourn] lived alone with his mother seemed idyllic to him in retrospect. The loss of paradise when she remarried informed his outlook for over 40 years." Yet Allen is good

on the way in which politics, both local and national, have affected Ayckbourn's career in the theatre; he discusses a number of unpublished and little-performed works (for example, the adaptation of Sheridan's *A Trip to Scarborough*); and as a theatre artist himself he has an insider's perspective that makes this more than just a survey of his subject's life and work. What's more, he offers one of the pithiest, and more informative, summaries of Ayckbourn's philosophy of playwriting I have ever seen:

Ideas will come into the writer's head once he or she starts making the character do things, but it is his or her head, not the character's. So, the writer has to take the responsibility and the initiative. The writer has to get the structure clear, has to decide what the time-frame of the play is, has to think about what the space is in which the play takes place. None of this means it has to be completely realistic; just that the writer has to be in charge of the material. (261)



Druids, Dudes and Beauty Queens: The Changing Face of Irish Theatre.
 Edited by Dermot Bolger. Dublin: New Island Press, 2002; pp. 302. \$18.95 paper.

Reviewed by Christopher Morash, National University of Ireland

At the beginning of his contribution to *Druids, Dudes and Beauty Queens*, Vic Merriman reminds us why Irish theatre has had a profile out of all proportion to the small, relatively sparsely populated island from which it hails. "Irish drama's claim to social significance," writes Merriman, "rests on the pledge that in acts of theatre something more than box office, or the reputation of an individual artist, is at stake. Theatre is part of a broader cultural conversation about who we are, how we are in the world, and who and how we would like to be" (54). Underlying most of the contributions to this collection—and they are diverse, coming from theatre artists, academics, and journalists—is a concern (sometimes fully articulated, sometimes implicit) that changes in Irish society over the past decade have eroded the conditions that once made Irish theatre "something more than box office."

Simply put, the dominant feature of Irish cultural life since the seventeenth century has been the colonial relationship with England and the attendant (albeit fluctuating) degrees of economic deprivation. "We are harder, a more masterful race than the comfortable English of our time," Yeats declared in 1901, "and this comes from an essential nearness to reality." For most of the period after Irish independence in 1921, this sense of "nearness to reality" continued to provide theatre artists with a sense of mission, as economic stagnation continued and the status of the nationalist minority in Northern Ireland remained unresolved. However, in the early 1990s, Ireland changed radically. In 1993, the Provisional

IRA declared a cease-fire, just as Ireland's so-called Celtic Tiger economy was beginning to generate some of the highest rates of GNP per capita in the world. Almost overnight, the claim to an authenticating "reality" was undermined; as a character in Christina Reid's play, *Clowns* (1996), put it: "the day them clowns in the IRA declared their cease-fire, they killed off half the Irish jokes."

Most contributors to *Druids, Dudes and Beauty Queens* register an awareness that they are dealing with a theatre world for which new interpretative paradigms must be found—and the best essays register this sense most acutely. In the most trenchant piece in the collection, Vic Merriman argues that two of the most successful Irish playwrights to have emerged in the past decade—Marina Carr and Martin McDonagh—"elaborate a world of the poorly educated, coarse and unrefined [. . .] gross caricatures which no purchase in the experiences of today's audiences. [. . .] In each belly laugh there is a huge cathartic roar of relief that all of this is past" (60). By contrast, John Waters—well known in Ireland for his view that rural Ireland is a traumatized culture—takes an opposing view of McDonagh's work, maintaining that we laugh at his grotesque rural characters "to protect ourselves from the psychic disintegration that would have followed from a genuine encounter with our own sense of the sadness and despair of our fellows" (46). Waters finds support for his position in Colm Tóibín's account of Billy Roche's Wexford plays. Unlike Merriman, both Waters and Tóibín insist that the prosperity of the past decade is just a facade, and that the basic hungers of Irish history continue to fester just beneath the surface, brought to our attention by the theatre.

Perhaps the most vivid sense of the changing world of Irish theatre, however, comes from Karen Fricker, editor of *Irish Theatre Magazine*. In her contribution, "Travelling without Moving," she argues that a heyday of formal innovation in the early 1990s has dissipated as the costs of mounting productions have risen, and the new prosperity has created salary expectations that the arts cannot fulfill. "Succinctly put," she argues, "the 'Celtic Tiger' could well be the worst possible thing to have happened to Ireland at this particular point in its artistic life" (118). As if to prove her point, on one hand, we have Anna McMullan, in her survey of Irish women playwrights, pointing to the Glasshouse Theatre Production's 1992–1993 season of plays by women as an important moment for women in Irish theatre; a few pages later, we find an "anecdotal history" of Glasshouse by its founders (Caroline Williams, Katy Hayes, Sian Quill, and Clare Dowling), which is as much a chronicle of unsustainability as of creativity. "Changing the world was all very well," notes Hayes. "But recently married, changing nappies was in the offing, and I needed to find some way of making some dough" (145–46).

Elsewhere in the collection, there are some useful surveys of selected aspects of Irish theatre culture in the period: Breandan Delap's constructively critical survey of Irish-language theatre, Ronan McDonald's cogently argued account of Northern Irish theatre, Owen Dudley Edwards's amiable

reminiscences of Irish plays at the Edinburgh Festival, and Mic Moroney's meandering selection of theatrical highlights. Each makes a good introduction to its respective area, as do Émile Jean Dumay's account of the French reception of Irish plays, and Maria Kurdi and Csilla Bertha's analysis of the Hungarian reception of Brian Friel's work. There are also entertaining first-person accounts of life in the Irish theatre world from the Abbey's artistic director, Ben Barnes, and from Cork theatre director, Johnny Hanrahan. However, none of these essays registers the sense of a fundamental paradigm shift to the same extent as Fricker and Merriman.

Druids, Dudes and Beauty Queens is published as a festschrift for Phelim Donlon, who was Drama Officer for the Arts Council of Ireland from 1984 to 2001. There can be little doubt that, during his term of office, the Irish theatrical infrastructure developed beyond all expectation: there are now more regional theatres, a greater diversity of theatre companies, better training, and more Irish theatre professionals than at any point in the past. Nonetheless, while it should be easier to create theatre in Ireland than ever before, it is equally true that the reasons for creating a distinctively Irish theatre are less clear than they have been for many years.



A History of Irish Theatre, 1601–2000. By Christopher Morash. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; pp. 322. \$60 cloth.

Reviewed by Mary Trotter, Indiana University–Purdue University

Inspired perhaps by the centennial of the founding of the Irish Literary Theatre in 1897, or by the critical excitement generated by the current wave of Irish playwriting, an unusual number of historical analyses of the Irish theatre have emerged in the last few years. The better of these texts reflect the trend in both theatre history and Irish studies to challenge the assumptions of earlier historical narratives by analyzing the work of previously marginalized individuals and groups, and by including feminist, materialist, or postcolonial perspectives in their analyses. Yet while a growing interest in pre-twentieth-century Irish performance is emerging into print, few Irish theatre history surveys look farther back than the 1870s, focusing instead on Irish drama's dynamic influence on modern theatre—and modern Ireland—throughout the twentieth century. While it's a long way from Smock Alley to the Abbey, and while modern Irish theatre was invigorated by global influences as well as local traditions, Ireland's rich theatre heritage created important artistic and material precedents for its twentieth-century stage. Christopher Morash's *A History of Irish Theatre, 1601–2000* performs a great service for the field by linking the modern Irish theatre to the country's earlier theatrical traditions, reminding us that Irish drama was enriching the lives (and sometimes enraging the tempers) of Irish audiences long before *The Playboy of the Western World*.

Morash's book is one of the most informative and elegantly written Irish theatre histories published in the last decade and, with its chronological and disciplinary range, one of the most comprehensive as well. Along with cogent critiques of Irish plays, playwrights, and actors during the past four hundred years, this text also provides useful insights about such matters as stage design, theatre management, touring practices, and audience behavior. The depth of Morash's analysis of his materials is as impressive as the breadth of his research. As a part of his discussion of every period, he considers a range of important issues, like women's roles on and off the Irish stage, the development of uniquely Irish theatre aesthetics, and the theatre's relationship to both nationalism and to the governments in power.

The early chapters provide useful information about the aesthetics of Irish theatre during the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, including excellent descriptions of the audience's behavior in Dublin theatres. His critical summaries of the dramas performed during the period interpret them in the context of contemporaneous political and social concerns, thus making explicit the Irish theatre's close but often uneasy relationship with the state. Early Irish theatre figures who made a mark beyond Ireland's borders, like Thomas Sheridan, Charles Macklin, and Peg Woffington, are discussed with an emphasis on their work in Ireland rather than their English successes.

Morash's discussion of the well-traveled terrain of twentieth-century Irish theatre is also compelling. Instead of focusing only on major theatres and playwrights, he pays close attention to innovative playwrights and companies in the Republic and Northern Ireland, grassroots theatre movements, and even theatre festivals to give a sense of the diversity and energy pulsing through modern Irish theatre. Specifically, this book provides excellent discussions of the politics surrounding theatre subsidies, censorship on the Irish stage, the importance of the amateur theatre movement in the 1930s and 1940s to the development of professional playwrights and companies in later decades, and theatrical responses to the Troubles in the early 1970s.

The relative brevity of this four-hundred-year history requires Morash to move quickly from subject to subject, but he pauses at the end of each chapter to describe in entertaining detail "a night at the theatre": a pivotal evening in Irish theatre history. These ten-page narratives offer fascinating insights into the theatrical milieu of each moment as well as descriptions of the aesthetics and politics surrounding the performances they describe. The eight "nights at the theatre" include a performance of *She Stoops to Conquer* in 1822 that led to sectarian riots, the Irish premiere of *Waiting for Godot* at the Pike Theatre in 1955, and the opening night of *Translations* in 1980. Morash also includes in this text a good number of illustrations, maps, and floor plans, a lengthy biographical glossary, and a detailed chronology. An erudite bibliographic essay at the end of the book points readers to closer examinations of specific historical periods.

Morash closes *A History of Irish Theatre* with an optimistic look at the future of Irish theatre culture, offering the opinion that part of the health of the Irish theatre stems from its “awareness of the ghosts of Ireland’s theatre history, continually challenging performers in the present to do something so remarkable that the past will have to be re-imagined again” (276). Morash’s book has reimagined recent Irish theatre historiography by reminding theatre historians to take into account the rich and indigenous theatrical foundation on which the modern Irish dramatic movement was built. Scholars of Irish theatre of all periods will find this text an indispensable resource. Theatre historians in all fields will find *A History of Irish Theatre* an excellent and accessible model of theatre historiography.



Staging Desire: Queer Readings of American Theater History. Edited by Kim Marra and Robert A. Schanke. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002; pp. 404 + illus. \$60 cloth; \$22.95 paper.

Reviewed by Daniel J. Watermeier, University of Toledo

In 1998, Kim Marra and Robert A. Schanke published *Passing Performances: Queer Readings of Leading Players in American Theater History*. Informed by contemporary gay and lesbian studies, the dozen or so essays in this pioneering anthology cast new light on the lives, same-sex relationships, and desires of a number of historically important actors and actresses from Edwin Forrest to Mary Martin. Taken as a whole, *Passing Performances* argued persuasively for sexuality as an important factor in the on- and offstage lives of the actors the volume scrutinized. In passing, so to speak, it also offered a perceptive account of sexism and homophobia in American theatre and American culture in general from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries.

In *Staging Desire*, Marra and Schanke extend the work begun in *Passing Performances*. In a gracefully written introduction, the editors highlight the theoretical foundations and problematics of “doing queer theater history” with references to some of the seminal works in the field. The fourteen essays are contributions by leading scholars specializing in applying the insights and approaches of gay and lesbian studies to theatrical biography and history. Unlike *Passing Performances*, the essays in *Staging Desire* focus not on actors but rather on subaltern desire in the lives and creative work of a number of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century playwrights and lyricists, critics and audiences, and designers and dancers. These are artists, with the exception of the dancers, who use theatrical means other than performance to express themselves, although because of the times in which they lived, such self-expression was almost invariably disguised, concealed, or closeted within their artistic creations. Discerning and explicating the hidden meanings in creative

work in relation to often conflicted private lives is the principal thrust of most of these essays. By arranging the essays within each artistic grouping chronologically, the editors also aimed “to show developments related to changing concepts of normalcy and deviance over time” (14). Indeed, these accounts of individual lives and careers viewed collectively do chronicle shifting attitudes toward homosexuality over the course of roughly a century.

There are eight essays on playwrights and lyricists. Kim Marra describes Clyde Fitch’s affinity for Oscar Wilde in particular and “things Wildean” in general. She then explicates how Fitch merged these private affinities with those of the dominant Progressive Age culture, writing plays and shaping performances of them to achieve an astonishing level of commercial success (43). J. K. Curry analyzes how Rachel Crothers’s sexuality and lifestyle simultaneously facilitated and limited her as a playwright. Mercedes de Acosta is an intriguing personality, but a minor, largely forgotten figure in the history of the American stage, but Robert Schanke recounts her life as a “case study on how . . . same-sex desire” can stimulate yet also destroy a promising career (101). Susan Clarke argues that the facts of Djuna Barnes’s life reveal that she was “caught in a double kind of needing to express her inner truth, yet also needing to disguise the reality of her formative sexual experiences. . . . In a day and age when sexuality was rarely discussed openly, Barnes used difficult language, subtle innuendo, and artistic genius to both reveal and protect her life” (122). For Barnes, however, this “double kind” became a frustrating, formidable barrier to widespread critical recognition and popular success. Bill J. Harking scrutinizes George Kelly’s plays, finding in them a tension between Kelly’s own “private homoerotic behavior or self-identity” (135) and his “need to mask his sexual identity from homophobic detection” (140). Jeffrey Smart offers an analysis of Lorenz Hart’s lyrics positioned against Hart’s various relationships, self-destructive behavior, and shifting social attitudes toward homosexuality from the 1920s to the 1940s. William Inge doubtless knew that the presentation of “an overly homosexual character or theme and Broadway success was an oxymoron” (198), but Albert Wertheim astutely discloses the “gay sensibility” that undergirds Inge’s ostensibly straight plays.

Unlike Fitch, Kelly, and Hart, whose secret same-sex orientation created a certain amount of personal and creative turmoil, for Cole Porter, as Mark Fearnow writes, “his secret was a source of guiltless pleasure and the maintenance of a double life a delightful game” (147). The sly, slippery doubleness of Porter’s lyrics when decoded is seen as a reflection of Porter’s own complex double life.

In the section on critics and audiences, Lisa Merrill presents the case that the homoerotic inflected criticism of James Oakes and Adam Badeau “paved the way to the future fame and fortune” of Edwin Forrest and Edwin Booth, respectively. In so doing, Oakes and Badeau “shaped the changing masculinities” that nineteenth-century audiences found laudable (253). Unlike

many of the figures examined in this collection, the distinguished, still active critic and playwright Eric Bentley, as Daniel-Raymond Nadon observes, “was able to undergo a personal coming out that coincided with the Stonewall Riots and the beginning of the gay rights movement” (288). Nadon examines Bentley’s pre- and post-Stonewall writings for their homosexual codedness and concludes, “Bentley’s career reveals that his queer desire, while submerged as well as exposed, has fueled his theatrical passions and shaped his writing and, in turn, the public perceptions and artistic aesthetics he has influenced” (306). In the only essay in the collection not concerned with individual artists, James Wilson connects the title character in *Lulu Belle* (1926), one of the most popular Broadway productions of the era, to the drag and gay subculture active in Harlem in the late 1920s.

In the section on designers and dancers, Bud Coleman recovers the multifaceted life and career of Loie Fuller, Jane T. Peterson delves into Robert Edmond Jones’s early career and scenic designs to find “the private person behind the public persona” (340), and Jay Scott Chipman illuminates Jean Rosenthal’s achievements as a lighting designer against the background of the theatre of her time and modern lesbian social history.

All of the essays are thoroughly researched, penetrating, and written in a clear, lively narrative style. *Staging Desire* offers a model of how one negotiates the increasingly complex intersections among critical theory, biography, theatre history, and textual analysis. Both *Passing Performances* and *Staging Desire* have collected notable, groundbreaking scholarship in American theatrical history. Taken together, they succeed in challenging and transforming the historical record, and they have made—and will continue to make—a difference.



A Problem Like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical. By Stacy Wolf. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002; pp. xx + 289. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewed by John Clum, Duke University

Stacy Wolf’s title promises more than her book actually delivers. Instead of attempting to cover the broad topic of “gender and sexuality in the American musical” mentioned in her title, she offers an intriguing lesbian feminist reading of the image and performances of four of the leading ladies of the American musical—Mary Martin, Ethel Merman, Julie Andrews, and Barbra Streisand—focusing on musicals from *South Pacific* (1949) to *Funny Girl* (1964). Her discussion of these stars includes analysis of a number of the musicals in which they starred, particularly *South Pacific*, *Peter Pan*, *Gypsy*, *My Fair Lady*, *Camelot*, and *Funny Girl*. A final chapter offers a queering of *The Sound of Music*.

Wolf claims that “what is ‘perverse’ about this project is that there are no lesbians there” (37). As a lesbian feminist reader of musicals, Wolf is interested in how certain performances and performers “can signify ‘lesbian’” (37). Wolf keeps “lesbian” in quotes to indicate that she is reading lesbianism into the performance. Certain markers aid the reader in evading the prevalent heteronormativity of the musical: a possibility that a relationship between two women can convey lesbian intimacy (Rose and Louise in *Gypsy*); a woman-centered or exclusively female social group (the nuns in *The Sound of Music*, for instance); a woman who is more powerful than the men around her or a woman who does not try to please a man (Rose in *Gypsy*); lack of certain signs of heterosexuality (Eliza in *My Fair Lady*, Louise in *Gypsy*, Mary Martin’s tomboy characters); and/or a powerful, “Sapphic voice.”

For Wolf, Mary Martin’s roles from *South Pacific* to *The Sound of Music* offer a tomboy who is never completely, convincingly feminine. Wolf, like a number of writers, hints at bisexuality and a “passing marriage” between Martin and her second husband and manager, Richard Halliday. (Wolf goes into more detail in her essay on Martin in *Passing Performances: Queer Readings of Leading Players in American Theater History*, edited by Robert A. Schanke and Kim Marra). Wolf ignores the defining role for Martin’s tomboy persona, Annie Oakley (Martin played it on tour and on television), which also provides an interesting contrast with Ethel Merman, the Broadway Annie. Rodgers and Hammerstein produced *Annie Get Your Gun*, and it was Martin’s success as Annie that led them to consider her for Nellie Forbush in *South Pacific*. If Martin is the tomboy, Merman, though middle-class, heterosexual, and genteel, is for Wolf the butch, working-class, Jewish “lesbian.” Wolf does not see that Merman’s persona as the brash wisecracking “broad” was a popular type in stage and film musicals from the 1930s through the 1950s; for examples, see Eve Arden, Joan Blondell, Charlotte Greenwood, Elaine Stritch, Susan Johnson, and Karen Morrow. Merman succeeded, despite relatively limited acting ability and rather awkward movement, because her voice could fill a Broadway house. If Merman is the “butch,” Julie Andrews is the “femme.” Wolf asserts, “she is undeniably feminine and thus, like many (lesbian) femmes, is mistaken for straight” (132–33). Here Wolf has substituted parentheses for quotation marks around “lesbian,” which does not help the logic of her assertion. Typically, Wolf forgets that she is reading Andrews as lesbian rather than asserting that she is a lesbian. Many viewers see Andrews as quite convincingly feminine and a marked contrast to the cartoon women who have dominated American musical theater. Why is it a mistake to read her as straight? Finally, “hyperheterosexual” Barbra Streisand seems to be queered by her Jewishness rather than the eccentricity of her early performances or the hyperdiva status she quickly assumed. Wolf centers her discussion of Streisand on *Funny Girl* rather than her television specials of the 1960s or her subsequent films.

I find *A Problem Like Maria* a bit frustrating. Wolf tends to conflate roles and performances, partly because she doesn’t have the experience of seeing live

the performers she discusses. She misses Martin's warmth and generosity of personality as well as the fact that much of what seems to be gender transgression in Merman's and Andrews's performances can be put down to the fact that both were primarily singers who were somewhat limited as actors. In the 1950s, audiences didn't demand as much versatility from musical theater performers as we do now. She might have been more effective focusing on the film and television appearances of artists of the period, in which case she might have included Doris Day, whose conversion in the 1950s from ingénue to tomboy to comic virgin mirrors the gender order of the period far better than the four performers she treats. Am I saying "you had to be there" to do performance analysis? I think you do need evidence for your assertions.

Particularly in the discussions of Merman (who wasn't Jewish) and Streisand, Wolf seems as interested in the ways in which Jewishness inflects these performers and the characters they played. Since *Gypsy* makes nothing of Rose's Jewishness (in the original production, Herbie was played as Jewish) and Rose has been played successfully by Angela Lansbury, Tyne Daly, Betty Buckley, and now Bernadette Peters, the subject seems irrelevant. Most of Merman's characters were not Jewish—one, Reno Sweeney, was a Christian evangelist! Conflating sexual orientation with religion and ethnicity confuses the issue.

There are some errors in the text that should have been picked up. Moss Hart, not Lorenz Hart, directed *My Fair Lady* and *Camelot* (149). Andrew Lloyd Webber, not Andrew Weber, wrote *Phantom of the Opera*, and he does not write his own lyrics (236). "Never Never Land" is not a waltz (68). Guinevere *does* marry Arthur in *Camelot* (153). Wolf writes as if Martin and Streisand appeared in all the performances of *South Pacific* (205) and *Funny Girl* (185), but Martin left the Broadway production in 1951 to star in the London production, which she left long before the show closed. Martha Wright replaced Martin in *South Pacific* and again in *The Sound of Music*, while comic Mimi Hines replaced Streisand in *Funny Girl*; both shows ran successfully long after their original stars left.

Nonetheless, reclaiming musicals for a lesbian audience is a worthy topic. Wolf clearly loves her subject and her enthusiasm makes the book a delightful reading experience.



A Chronology of American Musical Theater. 3 vols. By Richard C. Norton. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002; pp. xiv + 3044, illus. \$395 cloth.

Reviewed by Mark Fearnow, Hanover College

Ours may be the last generation to take full advantage of massive, hard-copy, data-rich reference volumes such as Richard C. Norton has here compiled.

Each of the three volumes is about a thousand pages, the third including a four-hundred-page index of shows, persons, and songs. As the economic obstacles to electronic publishing are overcome, and as the obvious advantages the electronic medium offers for portability and ease of revision are given time to persuade, these massive physical tomes are likely to be moved to storage and then to the shredder during our lifetimes. Though I accept and admire the utility of electronic research tools, I confess to a fondness for the smell, feel, and seeming permanence of these large-format, gleaming reference volumes. This set conveys a particular authority, not to mention heft.

Norton states his ruling idea: “The purpose of these volumes is to assemble a comprehensive picture of the popular American Musical Theatre as presented on first-class stages in New York City, from 1850 to the present, seen through the details of its theatre programs.” One is tempted, of course, to begin a critique of the New York-centrism in American theatre history studies and the myopia implied by the “first-class stage,” not to mention the vexing nature of the term itself. But every study must have limits, and an exhaustive reporting of production details for musicals residing elsewhere in geography and cultural status will have to wait. Norton apologizes in the preface for having taken seven years to compile this work rather than the contracted three, but so massive is the amount of material (more than a million proper names) that one marvels that seven years were enough.

Norton intends the three volumes as companions for Gerald Bordman’s *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*, first published, also by Oxford, in 1978 and reaching a third edition in 2001. Bordman’s book—a mere 840 pages and even issued as a paperback in 1986—places shows, songs, and persons in a season-by-season narrative history. That book benefits from Bordman’s observations about theatre history “firsts,” the emergence of new genres and styles, and in particular his definition of trends both economic and artistic. Norton’s volumes are pure data with no commentary. They provide a microlevel of detail to fill out Bordman’s macroworks to titles and key creators and performers. Like Bordman, Norton organizes his project season by season, and several trial research runs—each starting with Bordman’s overview and then turning to the details in Norton—produced a depth of knowledge that was previously unattainable without extensive travel to special collections. Best of all, Norton’s book makes readily accessible an exactitude about production and cast lists, order of scenes and the songs therein, and who performed which songs.

Norton is, from the perspective of a theatre researcher interested in the *how* as much as the *what*, frustratingly vague in describing the sources for the work. He thanks the staffs of the theatre collections at the New York Public Library at Lincoln Center and Harvard’s Houghton Library (where, presumably, he examined programs), and mentions in his acknowledgments all of the New York City newspapers and several trade papers as well as the Library of

Congress, the Boston Public Library, “and the many other useful collections and databases accessed via the Internet.” One cannot help wishing for more details about what was found where, but such information does not usually make its way into Norton’s footnotes.

Despite this flaw, the volumes are amazing in their comprehensiveness as well as their subtlety. Most appealingly, Norton provides, in footnotes, intriguing details that did not appear in the programs. For example, below his entry on the 1999 revival of *Kiss Me, Kate*, Norton offers three footnotes. One of them tells the reader the date, length of run, and theatre location for the original 1948 staging; another asserts that the revival’s book includes uncredited revisions by John Guare; and a third identifies the song “From This Moment On” as originating in the film of *Kiss Me, Kate* (1953), having been dropped from Cole Porter’s problematic *Out of This World* (1950). The notes sometimes provide a hint of the provenance of the information. A note for the entry for *Marat/Sade*, for example, informs us that the scenes and song titles do not appear in the program, “but have been prepared from the production typescript, published text, musical score and recordings.” This detail is delicious, in its own way. Of course a radical play produced according to a revolutionary staging method and in 1965 could not just list the scenes and songs as if one were about to take in *Carousel*. But most of us had not thought about the question before, and that tiny metaencyclopedic detail packs within it more suggestion, one could argue, than the full page of lists of persons and dates.



Forgotten Stars of the Musical Theatre. Series edited by Kurt Gänzl. New York and London: Routledge, 2002. Each volume \$49.95 cloth.

Gänzl, Kurt. *Lydia Thompson, Queen of Burlesque*.

Gänzl, Kurt. *William B. Gill: From the Goldfields to Broadway*.

Lamb, Andrew. *Leslie Stuart: The Man Who Composed “Florodora.”*

Reviewed by Brooks McNamara, New York University

In 1974, John Towson and I edited an issue of *TDR* devoted to popular entertainments. The field was essentially terra incognita then, and considered of little importance by most people interested in theatre history and dramatic theory. The emphasis at that time was overwhelmingly on “high” art in theatre and the theory connected with it, and anything else was considered beside the point.

By the 1990s, the climate was changing. Students and scholars were beginning to place less emphasis on the literary aspects of the theatre and more emphasis on the recording and analysis of *all* forms of performance—including those that had not been considered worth dealing with or were not understood twenty years before. There were investigations of ritual, processions, folklore,

buildings as entertainment, and the like. Among the new topics investigated, of course, were such popular forms as the circus, carnival, burlesque, vaudeville, melodrama, and musical theatre. It came as an unpleasant revelation to some theatre historians that the previously looked-down-upon popular forms had both interesting structures and vital links to the communities that produced them. In any case, they *were* being studied.

By the 1990s, too—at least in the United States—live theatre itself was also changing in response to a new, broader concept of performance. Then, too, Broadway was obviously in decline, and nonprofit theatres of various kinds were taking over many of its functions. Yet fewer and fewer people were attending live theatre. Increasingly, throughout the twentieth century, the major entertainment forms became the movies, radio, and later television. Popular entertainment has been one of the most important influences on these recorded media throughout the twentieth century, so why, in the twenty-first century, are not all historians and theorists giving more attention to the places that popular entertainment has gone?

All this is only to say that popular entertainment was surely coming of age in several different ways by the first years of the new century, a fact clearly demonstrated by the new series, “Forgotten Stars of the Musical Theatre,” appearing under the editorship of Kurt Gänzl, a respected British historian of musical theatre.

Gänzl resists any really larger picture of the subjects in his series. “The decoration, the theorizing, the generalities, and the exaggerated search for (shudder) significance,” Gänzl says in the general introduction to the series, “will be missing. Perhaps because I’ve spent so much of my life as a writer of reference works and encyclopedias, I am a thorough devotee of fact, and these books are intended to be made up wholly of fact.” They are, and this alone should give the reader a clue as to where the series comes down.

Yet Gänzl also says in the general introduction that he is simply including biographies of people who “had fascinating lives.” By and large, however, these people didn’t lead very fascinating lives, but that really isn’t the point. What makes each person notable is something else. Thompson, for example, is justifiably famous not so much for the details of the life she lived as for what she and the British Blondes helped to start in America. As for Gill and Stuart, both *Adonis* and *Florodora* are classics of American popular entertainment. We find out many, many details about them, but we learn little about who the two men *were* and about their impact.

In addition, there is precious little explanation of vital but obscure terms. Gänzl and Lamb seem to think the reader already knows these things, perhaps because *they* do. The very unclear distinctions between burlesque, pantomime, extravaganza, and spectacle are never really taken up, for example, and in *Lydia*

Thompson, Gänzl waits nearly ninety pages before he even discusses early burlesque.

That is the weak point of all three books—there is no context and no sense of the three subjects' places in the popular-entertainment world of the time. One show written by, or composed by, or starred in by a subject of the series merely leads to the next. And there is little discussion of these shows beyond very long quotations and compendious cast lists. But what were the shows like and what was their meaning? Gänzl and Lamb never really tell us, and it would be good to know; all interpretation is by definition wrong. Indeed, where three of the books are lacking is in the area of basic interpretation. They do read more like “reference books or encyclopedias.”

All in all, the series seems curiously old-fashioned in its approach. It is like many of the scholarly studies written half a century or more ago; it assumes specialized knowledge on the reader's part and provides little or no interpretation of the lives of the subjects. Gänzl and Lamb *do* provide the basic facts. It remains for someone else to provide perspective at a later time, for “Forgotten Stars of the Musical Theatre” certainly does not provide it.

Gänzl feels that it is not the job of the series to offer any real context, and, right or wrong, he does not. His position is not entirely illogical. Thus, it is an important thing for popular-entertainment studies that the series has come to exist; the books provide scholars in a new and rapidly expanding field with vital biographical information not easily obtained elsewhere. First things first, as Gänzl might say. *Thompson*, *Gill*, and *Stuart* all made substantial contributions to a newly discovered, unequally documented field, and it is good to have some information about them in one series.



Disciplining Satire: The Censorship of Satiric Comedy on the Eighteenth-Century London Stage. By Matthew J. Kinservik. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2002; pp. 301. \$48.50 cloth.

Reviewed by Phyllis Dircks, Long Island University

In *Disciplining Satire*, Matthew J. Kinservik revisits the perennially fascinating topic of the Licensing Act, exploring its effect on satiric comedy during the remainder of the eighteenth century and presenting the Licensing Act as an instrument of discipline in Foucault's sense, a mechanism that provided both training and correction for playwrights, educating them in the production of socially and politically acceptable plays.

Kinservik's chief contribution in this book is his study of the productive, rather than the repressive, effects of the Licensing Act of 1737. His historical

recontextualization of the law is painstakingly thorough as he plumbs documents from the Lord Chamberlain's office, studies the theatrical repertory, reads daily newspapers and theatrical reviews, and scrutinizes unpublished manuscripts. Considering primarily Leonard Conolly's *The Censorship of English Drama, 1737–1824* (1976), which examined the plays in the Larpent Collection, Kinservik notes that previous scholarship is marked by a tendency to focus on the negative effects of the Licensing Act. By contrast, Kinservik takes a Foucaultian view of censorship as a regulatory and productive mechanism rather than a punitive tool. He argues that the denial of a license for a play, as evidenced in the Larpent Collection, illustrates the failure of censorship. He views the developing interest in psychological characterization, the growth of the celebrity factor in such performers as Garrick and Macklin, and the popularization of Shakespearean plays, albeit rewritten, as direct and positive results of the Licensing Act. Kinservik serves up a savory study of its effects by analyzing the satiric works of Fielding, Foote, and Macklin, three of the most controversial satiric playwrights, finding in the work of each a unique result of the Act.

Kinservik's contextual view of the eighteenth-century stage uncovers a good deal of common sense. For instance, Fielding, long the scapegoat for the Licensing Act, is exonerated as Kinservik demonstrates that only the circumstances of time and place have given him this title. Tracing the frequently overlooked evolution of Fielding's satiric style, Kinservik reminds his reader that the censorship provision of the Act predated the playwright's infamous last two controversial seasons and that Fielding was, throughout his career, more pragmatic than partisan. Similarly, the author's careful distinction between the metonymic characters of Foote and the usually metaphoric characters of Fielding argues convincingly for Foote's ability, given his gift for mimicry, to sustain topical, punitive satire within the Act's parameters. Perhaps most compelling is Kinservik's treatment of Macklin's satires, which he likens to Shavian problem plays in their seriousness of purpose and tendency to reform, citing them as examples of the "new satire," in which characters of great psychological complexity were created to communicate the social critique that could no longer be articulated after the Licensing Act. He scrutinizes Macklin's unpublished and unproduced farce, *The New Play Criticiz'd*, for insights into the playwright's view of possibilities for post-Act satire, and he appends Macklin's late, unfinished satire, *The Spoil'd Child*, printed for the first time from manuscript, as evidence of the centrality of character to his satire, the means by which Macklin gained a sympathetic response from his audience.

Despite its many achievements, *Disciplining Satire* generates some unsettling problems. By focusing so intensively on the Licensing Act through the lens of Foucault, Kinservik seems not to have noticed the overall shift in early eighteenth-century sensibility toward gentler tones that was evident in verse satire as well as in stage comedy. Moreover, Kinservik maintains that his conclusions insist on a rejection of the satire–sentiment dichotomy without

noting that such an opposition has been rejected for many years through the writings of Kenny, Bevis, and others. Also, he strains to reach some of his conclusions. For instance, he views Collier as the de facto censor of the early eighteenth-century stage despite Collier's numerous opponents. Moreover, Edward Filmer's discountenancing of Collier's charges against the theatre because Collier's "Passion quite blinds his Reason, and confounds his Judgment" leads Kinservik to the general, but unsustainable conclusion that "a satirist cannot be a reformer." Students of eighteenth-century theatre may agree with Kinservik that the 1728–1737 era was an aberration, but they may well ask whether sympathetic satire, which appeared early in the eighteenth century as part of the shifting sensibility, would not have continued to develop naturally without the Licensing Act. Indeed, they may well question the efficacy of using a twentieth-century philosopher's theory of discipline as a guide to eighteenth-century English satiric comedy.

Nevertheless, Kinservik's book is a useful, extremely well-researched, provocative examination of a phenomenon that deserves renewed attention. He has indeed provided readers with a study that will stimulate discussion for years to come.



The Theatres of Molière. By Gerry McCarthy. London and New York: Routledge, 2002; pp. 238. \$30.95 paper.

Reviewed by Virginia Scott, University of Massachusetts

Gerry McCarthy's intention in this book is to "re-examine Molière, the man of the theatre, in the context of his profession, his education and the views of behavior he might have held in common with his contemporaries" (xiv). At the center of this re-examination, McCarthy places Molière the actor, asserting that it was because he was an actor that he was able to "annex Corneille's tragic scene to the popular stage of *Sganarelle* or *Le Médecin volant*" (61), that is, to develop a form of serious comedy that relied on the power of the actor to engage the audience. It was in the age of Molière that the French theatre began to turn toward the illusionistic stage, "asserting its potential to overwhelm the performer," but Molière—though often involved in enormously spectacular court productions—remained faithful to the "experience of the actor, conceiving the means of imaginative life out of the bare skeleton of words and action which is the play" (4). In McCarthy's view, Molière's fidelity to actor and text must have arisen from his early experiences with popular theatre in Paris and his apprenticeship as a nomadic actor playing in assorted spaces before 1655.

The book begins with chapters devoted to discussions of street theatre and Jesuit school theatre, the author assuming that these were the primary theatrical influences on the Parisian-born and Jesuit-educated Jean-Baptiste Poquelin.

These are followed by a few pages on the *farceurs* Molière might have seen perform at the Hôtel de Bourgogne and even fewer pages on the *commedia dell'arte* troupes that he assumes played in Paris during Molière's youth. McCarthy then approaches various of Molière's texts—early farces, *L'École des femmes*, court entertainment—as evidence that will yield confirmation of his theses. He then discusses Molière's staging, scenes and costumes, and acting, and he finishes with three chapters on the audience. Throughout the book, the author asks interesting questions and proposes stimulating ideas, but the book has its share of problems.

The book is seriously underresearched. McCarthy depends almost entirely on secondary and even tertiary sources with the exception of Molière's own works. He demonstrates little or no knowledge or understanding of the traditions of French farce, for instance, while his single source of information for the *commedia dell'arte* in France is Pierre-Louis Duchartre's inaccurate and long-superseded book. His chapter on acting contains no discussion of how scholars and theorists have approached the very difficult historical questions that arise. Unfortunately, Sabine Chaouche's *L'Art du comédien: déclamation et jeu scénique à l'âge classique* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001) was published too late to have been of use to McCarthy, but her bibliography suggests how much primary and secondary material he might have investigated.

This is also a careless book, careless enough to lose some credibility, although many of the misstatements are minor. Molière's grandfather may have taken him to see the *farceurs* at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, but not to see the Italians, since they did not appear in Paris between 1624, when Molière was 2, and at the earliest 1639, a year after his grandfather Cressé was dead. Molière did not play just one of the bores in *Les Facheux*; he played at least three of them and possibly more. Molière did not “dance professionally”; had he done so, he would have been a dancing master, which he was not. Molière did not play Sbrigani in *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*; he played Pourceaugnac himself. More to the point, perhaps, are debatable statements about the plays. McCarthy asserts, for instance, that in the lost 1664 three-act version of *Tartuffe*, Tartuffe succeeds in seducing Elmire, and that the play was “a daring and topical conception of the defeat of a cramped and jealous husband by a younger and more attractive lover” (108). The purpose of this contention would seem to be to defend McCarthy's argument that *Tartuffe* began as a version of the standard farce plot of the husband cuckolded by the clerk, an intriguing if problematic idea.

In spite of its deficiencies, *The Theatres of Molière* could be useful to the nonspecialist with an interest in the theatre practices of the seventeenth century. It is most sound, perhaps, in its discussion of Molière's audience and its use of the *Lettre Écrite sur la comédie du “Misanthrope,”* attributed to Jean Donneau du Visé, as a means of analyzing the relationship of the play and its context. The analysis of the rhythmic elements that must engage the actor who attempts

Molière is also interesting, although any actor who does not instinctively perceive the cumulative physical and emotional tensions in the “sonnet scene” of *Le Misanthrope* should probably not be cast.

In the long run, seeing the works of Molière as fully informed by acting and the actor is a welcome change from conventional literary studies. The problems of developing such a vision are, however, enormous, given the difficulty of writing about historical acting. As is often the case, it is in the concluding chapter that the author makes the best and clearest statement of the ideas that arise in the book. The reader who wants to follow the threads of McCarthy’s argument might profitably begin here and then read the earlier sections to see how and if he makes his case.



Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship. By Joseph Loewenstein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; pp. 221. \$60 cloth.

Reviewed by James P. Bednarz, Long Island University

For almost twenty years, Joseph Loewenstein has explored the rise of what he calls “the bibliographic ego,” particularly in the work of Ben Jonson, and his new book is his most sophisticated analysis yet of its genesis and evolution in early modern England. What is especially valuable about his new study of Renaissance literary/theatrical sociology is the manner in which he refines and expands our current sense of the complex interface between performance and print that played such a decisive role in shaping the careers of professional writers. Performance and publication were, he contends, competing media that elicited a wide range of attitudes from such dramatists as Shakespeare, Robert Greene, Thomas Heywood, John Marston, and even Jonson himself. The result is an illuminating portrait of Jonson as a writer who took greater pride in the specific theatrical origins of his drama than recent histories have allowed.

Loewenstein’s “The Script in the Marketplace,” an essay that appeared in *Representations* in 1985, argued that the folio *Workes of Benjamin Jonson*, published in 1616, marked a decisive moment in the creation of modern authorship. Through the folio, Loewenstein maintained, Jonson had finally managed to insulate himself from the debased conditions of the commercial theatre and to discover, through the power of print, a level of mastery over his scripts that the “loathed stage” withheld. In doing so, Jonson “strengthened his conception both of the abstraction of the work of art and of his own proprietary interest in that abstraction.” The playwright’s sense of “neoclassical *auctoritas*,” epitomized by the *Workes*, was, accordingly, a crucial moment in the history of proprietary authorship that would culminate in the first copyright law—the 1709 Statute of Anne—which legally granted literary property rights to authors rather than to the stationers who physically produced their tomes.

In *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship*, however, Loewenstein complicates this picture by examining the ongoing negotiation during the early modern period between entrepreneurs of press and stage for control over dramatic manuscripts, and he assesses how this institutional competition influenced the ways in which playwrights functioned within these overlapping markets. What is particularly vital in professional dramatists' attempts to cope with these appropriating industries, he stresses, is what he calls "authorial fantasy," the ancient perception that writers somehow still possess their work regardless of who buys it. Indeed, Loewenstein's treatment of Martial's influence on Jonson's discourse of plagiarism emphasizes an important, largely neglected, element of the dramatist's self-conception. Classical theory, based on the assertions of writers such as Martial, validated Jonson's "author-campaign" to establish his reputation. Even as the early modern economies of theatre and print transformed the way in which authors presented themselves, authors' mythic projections of their own stature, grounded in ancient precedent, equally influenced the terms of their engagement with these industries. Private fantasies as well as trade practices thus become, in Loewenstein's model, primary preconditions for the evolution of contemporary interpretations of intellectual property.

One of the virtues of *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* is that, rather than depicting a cultural marketplace racing toward print, Loewenstein documents the ambivalence and even aversion that some English Renaissance dramatists, such as Heywood and Marston, displayed toward publication. This, in turn, provides a congenial context for examining, with greater nuance, Jonson's affiliations with theatre and bookstall and their determining effect on his sense of himself as an author. Heywood, for example, who wrote for the public playhouses, admits that "it was never any great ambition in me, to bee . . . Voluminously read" (50). He preferred to see his plays performed and to act in them. Marston, who composed for the private theatres, similarly insisted that the meaning of drama "rests much in the Actors voice," and that "Comedies are writ to be spoken, not read." "Remember," he cautioned, "the life of these things consists in action" (105–06). Heywood and Marston consequently provide examples of what we might call "the performative ego," through which playwrights realized themselves in production. Jonson found a measure of control over his texts in print, but he also was convinced that it subjected him to malicious or ignorant readers who threatened to undermine his authority. "For Jonson," Loewenstein concludes, "committing a play to print has contradictory valences: he can experience publication both as a loss of control and as the recovery of a control earlier ceded to the stage" (161). In contrast to the onslaught of books that imbue print with the magical property of creating Renaissance dramatic authorship, *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* consequently bridges conceptions of theatrical and print reputation, showing the continuity between both kinds of fame in the Elizabethan and Stuart periods.

But even the best studies of early modern theatre and publishing are so enmeshed in conjecture that they seldom please all readers. The movement of

scripts from theatres to bookstalls remains an extremely controversial topic about which we still know little. Specialists, moreover, might find Loewenstein's determination to write about literature "in the context of a total history of society" a bit misleading, considering that the book omits extended treatments of such crucial topics as literary collaboration, licensing, and censorship, which simultaneously shaped the material he considers. They might also feel that he offers relatively weak arguments to explain two key passages in English Renaissance literature: "the little eyases" dialogue in *Hamlet* and Greene's attack on Shakespeare as an "upstart crow" in the *Groatsworth of Wit* seem curiously underanalyzed. In the volume's most egregious misreading, Loewenstein contends that Jonson's statement in *Cynthia's Revels* that "they say, the *umbræ*, or ghosts of some three or four playes, departed a dozen yeeres since, have bin seene walking on your stage heere" might be "a specific reference to the Admiral's Men's 1597 revival of *The Spanish Tragedy*" (95). Yet here Jonson is clearly referring to recent productions at Blackfriars, where old plays were being revived to pad their current schedule. Indeed, Loewenstein's reading of the "War of the Theatres" is never explicitly enunciated.

Whatever local problems this book exhibits, however, are minor compared to the conceptual breakthrough it offers in allowing us to trace Jonson's ongoing anxiety about authorial control, even in print, as he labored to refashion the status of dramatic authorship both for his age and our own.



The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage. Edited by Stanley Wells and Sarah Stanton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; pp. xvi + 322. \$60 cloth, \$22 paper.

Reviewed by Cary M. Mazer, University of Pennsylvania

Gary Taylor, in his leadoff entry in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*, begins with a catalog of images of pregnancy, labor, and childbirth in Shakespeare's plays in order to assert that "we mislead ourselves if we imagine a playing moving *from* text *to* stage, as though textuality and theatricality were two separate entities. . . . For Shakespeare, a play began life in the theatre" (1). Just so. But the challenge of writing Shakespeare performance history is that subsequent theatres—however much they implicitly recognized Taylor's truism, regardless of the literary or canonical status they granted to the text, and regardless of the cultural capital invested in the very notion of "Shakespeare"—were, nonetheless, moving from text to stage, making theatre from pre-existing scripts. To write about the history of Shakespeare in performance is to write about this fact.

Ideally, a Shakespeare performance historian must write not just about what individual theatre artists did with Shakespeare, but how they conceived and

created theatre in general. Several of the essays in Stanley Wells and Sarah Stanton's volume (Jean I. Marsden on Restoration and eighteenth-century performances, Jane Moody on Romantic Shakespeare, and Michael A. Morrison on North American productions) are, as is fitting for a *Cambridge Companion*, linear narratives of who-did-what-how in particular times and places. The best of the essays, though, examine instead the creative hearts and minds of the artist who made theatre out of these scripts, and the material conditions and circumstances that shaped the theatre they made. As Richard W. Schoch writes about nineteenth-century pictorial Shakespeare, "Pictorialism was not what actor-managers thought about when they staged their productions; it was *how* they thought" (59).

Some essays are organized around aesthetic mind-sets (Marion O'Connor on "Reconstructive" Shakespeare) or around organizational structures (Robert Smallwood on the companies that emerged in the twentieth century as official and vital producing organizations in Stratford and London). Simon Williams, Peter Thomson, and Penny Gay contribute essays that focus on the challenges that actors faced when playing the roles. Williams uses the role of Macbeth as his test case to talk about the challenge of acting the tragedies, using actors from Garrick and Kean through McKellen and Sher to provide snapshots of different approaches to psychology and histrionic expression. Thomson writes about the comedies and, after examining clown roles, ensembles, and "character" roles (such as Shylock, Malvolio, and Falstaff), examines the "double act" of comic actors who simultaneously represent character and celebrate their own comic personae as actors. Gay similarly discusses the challenges of the female roles, correlating actress's performances through the centuries with contemporaneous psychological theories and gender and power relationships, and, admirably, using the career of Peggy Ashcroft as her test case.

Placed immediately before the concluding trio of essays on non-British theatre is a cluster of essays that frame the issues raised by "foreign" Shakespearean productions. Anthony B. Dawson writes about both intercultural productions (Ariane Mnouchkine's *Richard II* serves as his example) and "nationalist" appropriations of Shakespeare (as in the case of Germany's claim to "*unser Shakespeare*"), distinguishing between artists who seek to "universalize" Shakespeare and those who cherish, or perhaps even fetishize, his "otherness." Peter Holland examines touring productions, both the culturally freighted exports from Britain and the foreign productions that come to London, whereas Wilhelm Hortmann discusses political stagings from the 1920s on in Germany and Eastern Europe, ending with a comparison of several colonial and postcolonial productions and adaptations of *The Tempest*. These entries set the stage for a collaborative essay on productions in Asia (by John Gillies, Ryuta Minami, Ruru Li, and Poonam Trivedi), which is careful to distinguish among the differing cultural and political traditions of Japan, China, and South Asia; and one on productions in Africa (by Martin Banham, Roshni Mooneeram, and Jane Plastow), which uses descriptions of individual productions across the

continent to account for the prevalence of stagings and adaptations of *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*.

To date, the theatrical volumes in the *Cambridge Companion* series have focused on individual playwrights or on the theatre of single nations or periods. To cover a single dramatist in performance in different nations and periods, and to do so without privileging the putative creative genius of the dramatist over the actor, designer, director, and manager, and without adding to that dramatist's canonical status by taking his canonicity for granted, is no small accomplishment.



Creolisations in Nigerian Theatre. By Victor Samson Dugga. Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies, 2002; pp. 197. € 20.95 paper.

Reviewed by Kevin J. Wetmore Jr., California State University, Northridge

The past two decades have seen the emergence of a great deal of scholarly work in English on West African performance in general and Nigerian theatre and drama in particular. Works by Alston, Ukpokodu, Dunton, Quayson, and an entire library by various authors on the theatre of Wole Soyinka have arguably made Nigerian performance second only to South African in terms of material in English about African performance available in the West. To this list must now be added Victor Samson Dugga's book, which sites Nigerian theatre as part of "the process as well as the product of social change," and goes on to offer a thorough analysis of three different contexts in which theatre and performance occur (12).

Dugga, in his own words, "takes the local observatory as site for the interpretation of the social processes of culture embedded in theatre practices in Nigeria" (17). The first chapter, "Context and Issues in Nigerian Culture, Theatre, and Drama," summarizes the cultural background of the different nations that make up the federation, noting that "Nigeria" came into existence in 1914, the product of trans-Saharan and transatlantic interactions with Islam, colonialism, and Christianity. He also notes that, "For Nigerians, 'Nigeria' is still a nation under construction," and contemporary theatre is in a constant state of flux (18, 19).

The next three chapters each offer "a progressive, historical, theoretical, and practical descriptive analysis of social change and transitions" as witnessed in three respective performance traditions (19). Dugga's main thesis is that all Nigerian performance is a kind of "creolisation," defining the term after Hannerz to mean a hybrid performance in a "process of transformation" via "interactive forces." The title of the volume gives the plural, "creolisations," because of "the diversity of theatre forms and disparity of their experience of [these] transformations" (20).

The second chapter, “Eggon Theatre: From Social-Ritual Archetypal Performances to Contemporary Re-creations,” offers an overview of five traditional performance practices among the Eggon, a minority people from central Nigeria, and gives an in-depth exploration of two of those practices: Engyo and Eku. Dugga’s work is at its best in explaining the practice, context, and meaning of the performance for his non-Nigerian reader. He demonstrates how “traditional” culture is, in fact, shaped and reinvented in the face of social change. He analyzes the Azhili Festival, a general gathering that is “an emergent tradition, which draws on the sum total of previously existing performance cultures” (53). Indigenous performance traditions, argues Dugga, participate in the process of social transformation and are, in turn, themselves transformed.

Chapter Three, “Yoruba Cultural Art Forms and the Literary Tradition in Nigerian Theatre: Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan,” contrasts the Eggon performance culture with Yoruban blends of Western-influenced literary traditions. Dugga is essentially correct when he observes that, in terms of scholarly work on Nigerian theatre, Soyinka and Osofisan are “overstudied,” and Dugga restricts his reading to “their usage of tradition in relation to changes in contemporary society” (66). Given that, however, Dugga’s analysis of *A Dance of the Forest and Death and the King’s Horseman* adds little to the existing literature on Soyinka’s work. Dugga is on much stronger (and underexplored) ground when he turns to *The Beatification of Area Boy* as a drama about contemporary Nigeria. Similarly, the analysis of Osofisan’s work, while cogent and interesting, is much more rooted in textual than in performance studies, and this chapter, subsequently, is not as relevant to Dugga’s main argument as the two that surround it.

Not so the fourth chapter, interestingly entitled “Theatre for Specific Purposes: Women’s (Human) Rights Campaign and Corporate Image Making.” While I question the accuracy of the title (the theatre of the Eggon, Soyinka, and Osofisan did not serve random purposes; perhaps Dugga could have devised a more apt description), the comparing and contrasting of two very different theatrical campaigns—*The Evil Blade* by Amatu Briade and *We Are All Involved* by Bose Tsevende—presents a compelling portrait of the varieties of contemporary urban theatre in Nigeria. Dugga summarizes the plot of each play, analyzes the target audience, and studies the performance. He offers a nuanced discussion of the questions generated by *The Evil Blade*, a play against female circumcision facilitated by the Performance Studio Workshop, and constructs *We Are All Involved*—a play sponsored by the National Electric Power Authority, the state-owned electric company, that attempts to create a positive corporate image for its sponsor—as both “theatre as public relations device” and “the commercial application of cultural production” (170). This chapter is easily the most interesting and insightful in the book, and I hope that more scholarly work on both types of Nigerian theatre will emerge in the next decades.

The final chapter, “Shades and Patterns in the Creoles,” brings together the three theatrical paradigms and considers them as “creolisations.” Observing

that, in all three contexts, it is the educated members of society who are making the theatre and serving as its audience, Dugga argues that the theatre is “a proactive means of dealing with change,” as Islam, Christianity, and colonial culture move to replace indigenous practice (167). He concludes by noting that theatre “in the Nigerian context is a cultural identity, a conscious creation, as well as a pleasurable event” and both changes and is changed by a multicultural, multiethnic society in a constant state of flux (176).

Dugga’s work is eminently readable, and even those familiar with Nigerian theatre and drama will find the glossary of Eggon terms useful. The details and information Dugga provides as a “local observatory” constitute a solid contribution to this growing body of scholarship. The chapter on “theatre for specific purposes” is particularly interesting and should serve as a springboard for further study. The work, however, is problematized by the quality of the support material. The table of contents is incorrect from page 20 on, and most of the entries in the index are grossly inaccurate as well. While these flaws do not mar Dugga’s scholarship, they do reflect poorly on the publishing process and make the book more difficult to use. A scholarly study of this quality deserves better.