

Playing both erudite academic and passionate spectator, Davy shows us how the degenerate denizens of WOW created sexual vernaculars for speaking lesbian desire in/as performance, and produced, in electrifyingly close proximity with their audiences, subversive interpretations of bodies and how they matter onstage and off. Davy's book is by no means an exhaustive or definitive history of WOW—no single study could attend to the hundreds of performances by the hundreds of women who have strutted their stuff at the Café, though the author's massive appendix makes great strides toward this end—and further, it is, surprisingly short on visuals. Given the number of photographs and fliers, tickets and invitations that Davy unearthed, it is a shame that she did not include more images in the book. That said, however, *Lady Dicks and Lesbian Brothers* is a remarkable scholarly achievement, one that addresses egregious omissions in the historical record and charts an alternative genealogy of feminism and its relationship to queer theory by tracing the impulses, desires, influences, and exigencies that conspired to make the WOW Café an artistic possibility and a material reality.

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Artaud and His Doubles. By Kimberley Jannarone. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010; pp. xiv + 253. \$55.00 cloth, \$30.00 paper.

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Reviewed by Jessica Wardhaugh, University of Warwick

The focus of *Artaud and His Doubles* is Antonin Artaud: poet, theorist, playwright, director, madman, and—as Kimberley Jannarone contends—fascist. This contention is intended as a challenge to Artaud's followers and admirers, many of whom view the man and his work through the lens of 1960s radicalism, revering him as an icon of individual revolt. For American theatre scholars and practitioners, Artaud stands as an inspiration to experimentalism and liberation; for French philosophers, not least Foucault and Derrida, he offers a profound, tormented reflection on human suffering and inhuman oppression, while his eclectic *Oeuvres complètes* exemplify the fragmentary, fluid nature of text. He is, in short, an icon of the Left.

Jannarone, however, conceives Artaud's significance in different and darker terms. In a lively and provocative study, she charts her own mental journey from the (now orthodox) eulogy of Artaud on the Left to a critical assessment of his writings and productions in the light of comparable initiatives in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Artaud's admirers have, she argues, often tended to focus on the later years of his life, notably his period of creativity from 1943 onward. In contrast, Jannarone throws light on his lesser-known role as a director (during 1926–8 he wrote, designed, and produced plays in his own Théâtre d'Alfred Jarry), concentrating particularly on his essay "The Theatre and Its Double," written in 1931–5 and published in 1938. This essay, a small but significant element in collected works that run to tens of thousands of pages, provides both the structure and

focus of Jannarone's study. Her contention is that Artaud's real "doubles" are to be found not among 1960s radicals, nor even among 1920s dadaists and surrealists, but among interwar, right-wing partisans of a vitalist new order, fascist proponents of people's theatre, and theorists of authoritarian leadership and rigorous crowd control in both theatre and politics. She further argues that the real character of Artaud's work can be discerned only through a proper contextualization of writings, rather than through their ahistorical (and overly reverential) treatment. Jannarone's claim for originality is therefore twofold: her work offers a new, close reading of Artaud's work in its historical context, and a reassessment of its political character.

The approach and argument of *Artaud and His Doubles* are both stimulating and fruitful, and this is a book that will prove thought provoking not only for Artaud scholars but also for cultural historians of interwar Europe. Jannarone presents a sustained and critical comparison of Artaud and the avant-garde while also making connections with dramatic theories and practices across interwar Europe, thereby offering a composite and profound reflection on the relationship between theatre and politics in this period. She explores, for example, how Artaud's conception of the "Theatre of Cruelty" both mirrors and diverges from the aspirations of avant-garde colleagues, with its passive audience and strictly codified behavior but striking differences in the conception of political and theatrical regeneration. While left-wing agitprop theatre might envisage the destruction of the existing order in favor of a new utopia, Artaud's theatre projected an image of a corrupt world without hope of redemption. Far from sharing a left-wing call for empowerment, Artaud's theatre treated the audience as a malleable mass or crowd, to be manipulated through emotion rather than intellect, and with a final aim of collective hypnosis ("The destruction of individual consciousness represents the highest notion of culture," as Artaud wrote in Mexico in 1936) (123). Through a fascinating exploration of Artaud's brief period as director of the Théâtre d'Alfred Jarry, Jannarone also suggests a somewhat terrifying convergence between theory and practice: his fantasies for total control led even his actors to fear for their safety onstage. Her hard-hitting conclusion lays bare the brutal worldview at the center of such theories and theatre: a primitive hunger for the annihilation of others—and of the self.

Yet Jannarone's approach and argument also present interesting challenges to the reader. While historians in particular will be sympathetic to what is essentially an endeavor to contextualize a literary work, they may be surprised by the limitations Jannarone imposes on her project. They may wonder, for instance, why Artaud's work is considered in the context of World War I and with regard to Italian and German theorists, but not in specific relation to the politics of 1930s France. They may question why there is such detailed identification of European influences on Artaud's thought, yet so little discussion of the personal exchanges, readings, and correspondence that must also have nourished his perspective. These lacunae no doubt arise from Jannarone's deliberate decision "to respect a boundary between an analysis of ideas and structures and an analysis of a man—although Artaud himself did not respect these boundaries" (xi). An understandable wish to move away from previous biographical studies, this

nonetheless has the effect of leaving “The Theatre and Its Double” seeming somewhat disembodied, lacking a grounding in its most immediate and personal context. Equally, although Jannarone argues very convincingly for the fluidity of ideas in this period, there is a concurrent assumption that fascism and the avant-garde remain entirely distinct, and that Artaud must therefore belong with either one side or the other. Historical research over the past twenty years has, however, tended to challenge this distinction, from Edward Timms and Peter Collier’s 1988 assertion that “there is no easy equation between experimental art and progressive politics” (*Visions and Blueprints*, xi) to more recent explorations of “avant-garde fascism”—notably the 2007 study of that title by Mark Antliff, to which Jannarone briefly refers. If the supposedly avant-garde Artaud could be fascist, this is perhaps also because fascism could be avant-garde—which leads one finally to wonder whether, given the wide-ranging, eclectic, and, in Jannarone’s words, “hardly classifiable” nature of Artaud’s oeuvre (6), it might not be too restrictive to categorize Artaud within any one political grouping.

None of these observations should, however, detract from the overall impact of this fascinating book. Indeed, such reactions are rather indicative of the lively debate that this stimulating reassessment of Artaud will be certain to provoke.

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Performing Bodies in Pain: Medieval and Post-Modern Martyrs, Mystics, and Artists. By Marla Carlson. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; pp. 240 + 8 illustrations. \$84.00 cloth.

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Reviewed by Noa Turel, University of California, Santa Barbara

In *Performing Bodies in Pain: Medieval and Post-Modern Martyrs, Mystics, and Artists*, Marla Carlson applies a scholarly lens to the common (mis)perception of contemporary gruesome spectacles as somehow “medieval.” Defining her book’s object as “live events in the course of which a performer either simulates or actually experiences physical pain” (2), Carlson juxtaposes examples from the recent past with analogous practices from the late Middle Ages. Each of her five chapters thus features two focal objects.

In Chapter 1, “Feeling Torture,” she contrasts “pre-modern and post-modern” (27) notions of empathy by comparing the projected effects of the Apartheid-era play *The Island* and the fifteenth-century French miracle play *Le Geu Saint Denis*. The latter also features in Chapter 2, “Imagining Death,” along with a 2005 staging of *The Pillowman*; in this chapter, Carlson examines “the role of imagined pain in performances of sanctioned killing by the state” (50). The next chapters add the dimension of gender to the discussion: in Chapter 3, “Enduring Ecstasy,” Carlson discusses Marina Abramovic’s 2005 reperformance of *Lips of Thomas* alongside Jean Fouquet’s ca. 1450 illumination *Martyrdom of Saint Apollonia* to “examine the loophole through which women