NTQ Book Reviews

edited by Bella Merlin

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Arthur F. Kinney, ed.
***Hamlet*: New Critical Essays**
New York; London: Routledge, 2002. 246 p. £65.00.
ISBN: 0-8153-3876-7.

George L. Geckle, ed.
***Measure for Measure*:**
Shakespeare, the Critical Tradition
London; New York: Athlone, 2001. 382 p. £95.00.
ISBN: 0-485-81004-2.

Each of these volumes, as the titles state, contains collected essays devoted to a particular work of Shakespeare. Richard Levin's concluding essay, in the first book, refers to 'the megagigantic body of commentary on *Hamlet*', while Kinney's introduction cites the irascible Shaw on the 'innumerable volumes of nonsense' about it. This collection should add to the former, but it comes perilously close to qualifying for the latter as well.

At just under seventy pages, Kinney's introduction rehearses textual problems, critical reputation, and (superficially) performance history. Much comprises undigested chunks of primary sources, even though a number of those cited – Cibber or Low, Hazlitt, Archer, and Lowe – fail to appear in the bibliography. The unidentified Taganka production was by Yuri Lyubimov, and was staged in 1971, not 1964 (which is the year Lyubimov took over the Taganka). Yukio Ninagawa appears as 'Nimagawa'. Philip Edwards writes an essay on the Sonnets with a mention or two of *Hamlet*, while Peter Erickson demonstrates that we can 'talk about race in *Hamlet*' especially if we misread 'batten on this moor' as 'feed on this Moor' (though of course this makes no sense).

Having determined 'to focus on the material signification of the mirror', Jerry Brotton writes a good essay on the arras, while Terence Hawkes offers a typically iconoclastic and entertaining piece on Shakespeare 'as an agency of law and order'. Fortunately, Levin's essay comes at the end, by which time it is too late to quit: Hamlet 'is certainly not a nice young man'; Polonius is seen as 'the source of the sperm that produced [Laertes]' who is himself (guess what?) 'a nice young man'. Of the axioms with which Levin begins (including 'I actually admire the play') number seven might sum up the whole of this leaden volume: 'I do not think that my remarks on [*Hamlet*] constitute a remarkable discovery that will invalidate all previous criticism of the play.'

The second book under review is a compilation of responses to *Measure for Measure* between 1783 and 1920, and is supplementary to Brian Vickers's six-volume *Shakespeare: the Critical Heritage*. Its seventy extracts represent a broad and often contradictory range of attitudes to the play's sources, ethics, characterization, and technique. Charles Cowden Clarke identifies the 'brutal stupidity of Barnadine, the callous offspring of vicious ignorance', while Hazlitt describes him as 'one of the finest [characters] in all Shakespeare'. Coleridge calls the play 'a hateful work' yet Georg Gottfried Gervinus asserts that 'The vein of deep thought . . . beats in the fullest pulse in *Measure for Measure*.' 'I would rather read it than see it played', remarks A. B. Walkley, whereas C. E. Montague gives an enthusiastic account of William Poel's production of 1908.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the editors' introductions are similarly contradictory. Vickers castigates critics engaged in 'splitting off a character from its function in the play', having just done this for Isabella and Angelo, and blithely continues, 'The third character whose personality collapses under pressure is Claudio.' While Geckle's longest discussion of critical responses deals with '1920 to the present', the collection ends in 1920, so there is no chance of demonstrating his (sometimes irascible) assertions – for example that 'the criticism so far produced [by Cultural Materialism and New Historicism] shows up the weaknesses in both schools'.

In the light of the editors' antipathy to modern criticism (Vickers whines that 'each school picks out just those elements of a play which speak to their current preoccupations and ignores the rest, rewriting the play in terms of their own agenda'), it is not surprising, though it is bothersome, that the volume's most recent extract is over eighty years old.

PETER J. SMITH

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Rohan Quince
Shakespeare in South Africa:
Stage Productions during the Apartheid Era
Studies in Shakespeare, Vol. 9.
New York: Peter Lang, 2000 164 p. £32.00.
ISBN 0-8204-4061-2.

This book has been written out of the unexceptionable conviction that, in South Africa as elsewhere, productions of Shakespeare inevitably

reveal the ideological tensions within the society in which they are staged. During the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth, the fairly regular Shakespeare productions in South Africa either confirmed the British colonials in their identity as far-flung representatives of the imperial motherland culture, or (as when the English bard was appropriated by Afrikaner nationalists and by the ANC in its early days) sought to establish cultural and linguistic credibility for those outside the English-speaking hegemony.

However, following the National Party's election victory in 1948 and the construction of apartheid politically and ideologically, Shakespeare productions inevitably became far more susceptible to interpretation. These interpretations were cast in the light of current policies rather than, as before, politically marginalized expressions of the supposed timelessness and universality of Shakespeare's representation of the human spirit.

Rohan Quince examines a wide range of productions from the establishment of the apartheid era until its demise in the early 1990s. He discusses, for example, how the Afrikaans production of *Hamlet* in 1947 expressed the resurgence of Afrikaner nationalism through its focus on what has always been a central concern of the Afrikaners, the ownership of land. Hamlet becomes the prince desperate to win back what he has lost through Claudius's murder of his father, his ownership of Denmark. By the time the next major Afrikaans production of the play opened in 1973, the emphasis had shifted; directed by the liberal Robert Mohr, this was an Elsinore in the grip of a brutal fascistic regime, and a Hamlet who, like many liberal opponents of B. J. Vorster's government, did not know where to turn.

Quince's treatment of these two productions exemplifies both the attractive and frustrating features of the book as a whole. The description and analysis of the cultural and political contexts of the productions are enlightening. But the problem is that they are often considerably more interesting than what we are told of the productions themselves. It may be, for instance, that Afrikaner audiences in 1947 were invited to see Claudius as Smuts, and to read off from the production his unfitness to lead the nation. But the evidence from this discussion is less than compelling.

A good deal else about Quince's treatment of this apparently quite run-of-the-mill interpretation – which, frankly, could have been staged, in English or translation, almost anywhere on several continents – is also rather forcedly speculative. When the author asked Cobus Rossouw, who played Hamlet in the 1973 production, about his interpretation, his response – that 'South Africa is a prison. . . . But then the world is a prison . . . you can't just single South Africa out' – seems to be a fair indication of the ideological level on which both the earlier and later productions worked.

Problems also arise when Quince discusses the 1970 production of *Titus Andronicus*. We are told that the production, by Dieter Reible (a German director), 'resonated powerfully in the South African context, interrogating racist ideology and confronting white audiences with the institutionalized violence which underpinned the apartheid system'. But Quince never discloses precisely how racist ideology *was* interrogated. Though the violence on stage no doubt made a powerful impression – arguably confronting whites with their own system's violence – it was even more possible, as he hints himself, that the majority of the white audiences took it as a condemnation of barbaric black African violence on the continent at large. This was the 'barbarism' that 'civilized' South African whites were heroically trying to prevent in their own country.

Similarly, he argues that with the 1960 production of *Julius Caesar* (also directed by Robert Mohr), in which all the actors were classified as Coloureds, South African Shakespeare productions reached a turning point. This was the first time that 'Shakespeare was consciously used to interrogate the dominant ideology of the society. . . . The era of consciously political Shakespeare had arrived.' Yet apart from the play's echoing of the recent attempted assassination of the architect of 'Grand Apartheid', Hendrik Verwoerd, and the argument that the Coloured cast was a statement in itself, the production seems to have had no coherent political or ideological perspective, as Quince himself indicates. Again, the arguments for seeing this production, like others, as subversive of dominant racist ideology are altogether weak; the desire to see the theatre as vibrantly engaged in political conflicts and ideological tensions is not really borne out by the evidence actually adduced.

If Quince fails, then, to convince that the mainstream, state-supported productions of Shakespeare in South Africa over the last half-century were significantly different from trends elsewhere, his accounts of some of the activities of such non-mainstream enterprises as a Coloured high school's 1984 production of *Romeo and Juliet* in Afrikaans are far more interesting and substantial. Some of this material has no doubt been difficult to research, since it received much less coverage than the high-profile subsidized productions. But as the author points out, 'Shakespeare was performed by all sorts of people in all sorts of combinations during the apartheid era'. Not only that, but in a country where the nature of the casting and the composition of the audience were also inevitably politicized, Shakespeare production was a focal point of cultural struggle in a particularly intense and pointed form. The value of this book is that, intermittently, it makes us aware of how important a cultural signifier and, sometimes, a weapon of liberation, the theatre –

and Shakespeare in particular – has been, especially in the repressive climate of apartheid South Africa.

BRIAN CROW

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Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow
Reflecting the Audience:
London Theatregoing, 1840–1880
Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001.
299 p. £14.99.
ISBN: 1-902806-18-2.

The diversity and mobility of London theatre audiences during the mid-nineteenth century is firmly established in this book, whose attention to a previously neglected field of study makes it an invaluable asset for students and scholars of the period. Davis and Emeljanow use a wide range of material – from the most informal and subjective diary entries to census returns – in order to counteract, through case studies of seven theatres in different areas of the city, previous assumptions regarding theatre attendance.

The variety of resources used complements the argument put forward by the authors that specific theatre managements profited by addressing the precise and varied needs of a potential audience drawn from an urban population in constant flux. However, in the first two sections of the work, which focus upon four theatres in South and East London, the amount of statistical data included risks overwhelming the authors' deductions regarding attendance at each specific venue. It is really in Parts Three and Four, with the deconstruction of some popular mythologies relating to theatres and managements (including Phelps at Sadler's Wells and the Bancrofts at the Prince of Wales), that methodology and writing style combine effectively to reflect the wide range of prospective audiences for these theatres. In addition, the concept developed in the penultimate chapter of the 'theatric tourist', who entered the West End as a discriminating consumer, suggests a refreshing approach to the consideration of audiences venturing into theatre's commercial heartland during the nineteenth century.

In their conclusion, the authors quote Michael Booth, a clear influence, who suggests that making general assumptions about nineteenth-century audiences is a 'risky business'. And *Reflecting the Audience* argues, convincingly, that the only consistent feature of London theatre audiences was their fundamental diversity. Yet the true value of this book lies in approach as much as content, and the progress it makes towards constructing a method for comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic stimuli for theatregoers and theatre professionals during this period.

LUCIE SUTHERLAND

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Tim Miller
Body Blows: Six Performances
Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002.
242 p. £14.50.
ISBN: 0-299-17684-3.

Body Blows contains six of Tim Miller's performance texts, each introduced by the author, along with a foreword by Tony Kushner. The texts include *My Queer Body*, the piece for which Miller is perhaps best known, and *Glory Box*, his most recent work, which was seen at the Drill Hall, London, as recently as November 2002. In his introduction, Miller makes explicit his agenda for performance – his strong belief in performance as a tool for political activism, and as a catalyst for social change.

Most recently, Miller has used his work as a platform for campaigning for 'marital' rights for gays and lesbians in North America. *Glory Box* relates his first-hand experience of coming up against the immigration system currently in force, which resulted in his Australian partner being refused entrance to the United States, despite his valid student visa. Miller uses autobiographical performance to articulate and celebrate his experience of life as a gay man in contemporary North America. He relates stories of love, lust, and passion, alongside stories of gay-bashing, punitive legislation, and the impact of AIDS on his immediate circle of friends.

The stage directions describe the way Miller appropriates visual metaphors to 'glue' the pieces together. These variously include metaphors of gardening, hoarding memories in his 'glory box', and the emotional and physical scars left on his body from key experiences. His stories are articulate, moving, and entertaining. His self-mocking acuity ensures that his stories never lapse into self-indulgence. He has a keen eye for detail and celebrates the inanity of everyday life. This book is highly accessible for a range of audiences, and would be of particular value to readers interested in queer politics and culture, theatre practitioners, and academics.

SARAH GORMAN

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Vera Gottlieb and Colin Chambers, ed.
Theatre in a Cool Climate
Oxford: Amber Lane Press, 1999. 222 p. £14.95.
ISBN: 1-872868-26-6.

The rationale for this book is clearly presented by its editors. It is an opportunity for a range of 'practitioners' to take stock of a century's worth of theatre work, and to look forward into the new millennium. The contributors were invited to write about the current 'theatrical situation' from

the perspective of their own discipline, to express how they want theatre to develop, and to say what a 'practitioner' might fear and hope of theatre in the new millennium.

Being set up in these terms, however, it is quite difficult to determine the readership at which the book is aiming. An average academic readership will probably not find pressingly useful such observations as: change in the theatre has always been led by writers; postmodernism emphasizes form over content; the Aristotelian paradigm has perhaps had its day; drama is human and personal; the unions were running the country in an extremely undemocratic way in the 1970s. These all too regular moments of stentorian self-importance, will not, I would guess, endear themselves to, let alone enlighten, a student readership.

Nor will the book's strangely archaic feel. With its concern for the written, its suspicions of spectacle, its distrust of commercialized smut (which is opposite to 'real' eroticism), the cumulative effect is of something that could have been written in the 1890s. Which brings us to a third possible readership, the lay audience. For them, I imagine the book will feel like something that they have already read in the arts sections of the broadsheets.

And here is the issue. Just because the contributors are 'practitioners', it does not follow that they will automatically be witty or clever. The fascination that they hold for some theatre academics may perhaps relate to the campaigns many of us fought for recognition of the practices of our discipline. But those campaigns have been led down a blind alley by subservience to a concept of the 'practitioner' which seems predicated on its distance from the practices of analysis and intellectual argument. Which might leave theatre academics with quite a lot to fear rather than hope for regarding the discipline in the new millennium.

SIMON SHEPHERD

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Declan Donnellan
The Actor and the Target
London: Nick Hern Books, 2002. 276 p. £10.99.
ISBN: 1-85459-127-4.

The Actor and the Target is an extraordinary book, both in its content and in its structural device, through which Declan Donnellan conveys philosophies and practices which strike the reader as being as relevant to daily life as it is to acting processes.

The chief premise is not particularly original. Donnellan invites actors to divert creative attention from themselves and their inner processes to their on-stage partners or 'targets' – whether those targets be the physical reality of another actor or the imaginative impetus of a thought. Implicit within his advice is that ultimately a performance cannot be fixed, as the 'target' is constantly changing. And, indeed, the successful and vital actor will overrule his or her own desire to fix a performance, and instead delight in the liberating maxim that there can be no 'right' or 'wrong' version.

The contents of the book are based – like 'spiders' legs' – round eight critical anxieties: 1) I don't know what I'm doing; 2) I don't know what I want; 3) I don't know who I am; 4) I don't know where I am; 5) I don't know how I should move; 6) I don't know what I'm feeling; 7) I don't know what I'm saying; and 8) I don't know what I'm playing. Initially, Donnellan's style and philosophy may provoke the theatre practitioner into querying how the author's suggestions can actually be implemented. However, the questions provoked in the early chapters come into sharp focus as the interdependence of the 'eight legs' is elucidated in the later chapters. Taking basic psychological premises – such as the idea of opposites co-existing in a single person or a single decision – Donnellan works through the rehearsal process of an imaginary actress, 'Irina', as she develops her interpretation of Juliet. There is detailed textual analysis juxtaposed with almost 'self-help' style theories.

This is not an actors' 'handbook': it requires critical analysis on the one hand, and intuitive understanding on the other. Indeed, I suspect it is a book to which the reader will return on many occasions, each time developing a more profound understanding of building a character and determining human action. To some extent, I question its readership, as it is evidently dealing with more sophisticated issues than a student actor might encounter. Yet I suspect the more experienced professional might not raise such issues as 'I don't know how I should move' without having some personal tools in his or her technical armament for dealing with such a fundamental – albeit crucial – enquiry.

For academic students of theatre and drama, the book will undoubtedly provoke many questions on the nature of professionals writing formally on theatre practice, and – more provocatively – on directors writing books on acting.

BELLA MERLIN

DOI: 10.1017/s0266464x03270196

Patsy Rodenburg
Speaking Shakespeare
London: Methuen, 2002. 356 p. £19.00.
ISBN: 0-413-70040-2.

Patsy Rodenburg's latest voice and speech text is an important addition to books on speaking Shakespeare. It persuasively instructs the novice actor that 'Shakespeare will act you. . . . He gives

you all you need.' Opening the voice will lead to the ability to work on clarity of speech, and developing the muscular ability to speak clearly will allow the actor to discover important clues to character and situation in the spoken text, 'acting clues written into the physical work constructions'. Many good explanations are provided for actors' negative reactions to this kind of work, with methods of overcoming them, as well as actors' most common problems with speaking Shakespeare: 'denial' and 'bluff'.

Much, if not all, of what Cicely Berry said in *The Actor and the Text* resurfaces here, but is reassuringly elaborated. Combining Berry and Linklater's *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice* (but without Linklater's adulation of The Bard), *Speaking Shakespeare* interprets the use of speech forms with relation to the scene and the whole play as well as to character, and it has the best section on iambic pentameter that I have seen. The title might almost have been 'Acting Shakespeare', as Rodenburg often moves into a directorial relationship with the actor/reader.

Well organized, and divided into bite-sized chapters containing exercises and useful summaries, the book is given added substance by the full section at the end which 'directs' the actor in detail through a number of monologues and scenes (though it is very poor on stage directions, exits, and entrances). Sometimes the tone becomes negative, with a lot of rules: like a book on pregnancy, it catalogues so many things that can go wrong that an actor could feel daunted. However, being led to focus on how Shakespeare's direction is written into the text, one is constantly reminded that giving full value to the spoken form of the text provides the actor with crucial notes.

LESLEY WADE

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Pamela Howard
What is Scenography?
London: Routledge, 2002. 134 p. £15.99.
ISBN 0-415-10085-2.

Towards the end of this book, Pamela Howard speaks of the careful scenography that created the blouse worn by Hélène Weigel in *Mother Courage* – 'the most beautiful blouse in theatrical history'. When the Berliner Ensemble visited London in 1965, Weigel advised Howard to remember that 'creation is about making decisions, and making decisions is the reflection of a personal vision'. The book is entirely (and quite unselfconsciously) illustrated with Howard's drawings, reflecting her considerable experience and distinguished practice, and it explores and articulates the complex interaction between scenographic choice – the *écriture scénique* – and personal vision.

She organizes the investigation around seven key perspectives: space, text, research, colour and composition, direction, performers, and spectators, in chapters that time and again reinforce the holistic and interactive nature of both theatrical creation and perception. The collaborative crafts of scene, costume, and property-making are never minimized, and yet there is a recurring and well-illustrated reflection upon the nature and extent of the scenographer's personal research and artistic vision.

The issues raised by this complex and challenging interface represent the enduring value of the book, balancing upon, as Howard describes, the 'tightrope between being good collaborators able to share and subscribe to other people's visions, yet at the same time remaining in control of their own creativity'. The book *does* propose an answer to the overarching question of its title – 'scenography is the seamless synthesis of space, text, research, art, actors, directors, and spectators that contributes to an original creation' – but the supplementary questions raised by Howard on this journey of exploration and analysis are far more stimulating and significant.

CHRISTOPHER BAUGH

DOI: 10.1017/s0266464x03290199

Irene Shubik
Play for Today:
the Evolution of Television Drama
Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
267 p. £15.00.
ISBN: 0-7190-5687-x.

Irene Shubik's 1975 book has long been considered a valuable source by academic writers on television drama, an insider's story rather than an academic work. The new edition adds 77 pages, an index, and some production photographs from Shubik's television productions. The additional material recounts her role in *Rumpole of the Bailey* (1975–92) and *Staying On* (1980), and in the origins of Granada's prestigious adaptation of Paul Scott's 'Raj Quartet', *The Jewel in the Crown* (1984).

It is good to have in print again Shubik's list of plays, dates, and personnel for 'Play for Today' and 'The Wednesday Play'. For these groundbreaking series of the 1960s and 1970s are of perennial interest. As a record of methods of the period, the book is useful, and it picks out some neglected but important figures (the writers Robert Muller and Tony Parker, for example – long out-of-print, no less significant for that).

A light editorial touch in the earlier section gives way later to some poor copy-editing. More seriously, the book was and still is a *memoir*, carrying a strong whiff both of self-justification and of old scores being settled. In 1975, Jeremy Sandford and Tony Garnett were targets; in 2000, it is Verity Lambert, Sir Denis Forman, Silvio Narizzano and Bamber Gascoigne. Compare the

presentation of Sandford as feckless Hooray Henry with Narizzano as egregious (Homo)Sexual Athlete. Lambert's machinations scupper Shubik on *Rumpole*, and Forman does the same on *The Jewel in the Crown*.

My scepticism arises from the repetition in substance of Shubik's 1975 allegations about *Cathy Come Home*. So unreliable was Sandford's research, she claims now, as then, that the BBC had to cut factual material after the first transmission. Sandford, Garnett, and Ken Loach all refute this, neither does the official documentation (including her own files at the BFI) substantiate it. I pointed all this out in NTQ57 (February 1999) over four years ago, and showed where her misinformation came from. All parties had access to this research, and minor tinkering has taken place with phraseology in the new edition. The pity is, however, that the section on *Cathy*'s alleged 'inaccuracy' was not removed altogether, It will continue to mislead, which helps no one. This reader is inclined to believe Shubik's generous praise of others; when she dispraises, I take leave to doubt.

DEREK PAGET

DOI: 10.1017/s0266464x03300193

Marc Maufort and Franca Bellarsi, ed.
Crucible of Cultures: Anglophone Drama at the Dawn of a New Millennium
Brussels: P.I.E.–Peter Lang, 2002. 343 p. £21.00.
ISBN: 90-5201-982-7.

Like many recently edited collections of essays, this volume emerged from a conference, held in Brussels in May 2001. One of its major attractions is the currency of its content. Not only have these essays been published in less time than the usual processes of a refereed journal would require, but there has been a conscious decision to present a snapshot of the global state of Anglophone drama in the 1990s, as well as a sense of the direction in which it is currently moving.

While there are certainly English-speaking theatre cultures that this book does not explore (India springs to mind), the works of playwrights and dramaturgs from South Africa, the Caribbean, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, Britain, and the United States are represented here. The plays of Daniel David Moses and Drew Hayden Taylor are discussed in three different essays, offering depth and new perspectives on First Nations dramatists who are practically unknown outside their native Canada.

There are two themes that seem to run through this collection: the first is the reflective potential of 'hybridity', based heavily on Homi Bhaba's theoretical location of cultures in transition. The second, taking its cue from Timberlake Wertenbaker's introductory essay, is the playwright's use of history: the revision of history, the dialogue with history, the intermingling of different histories.

The number of references to the cultural output of Ancient Greece throughout the volume is quite startling. While at first glance this could be interpreted as an attempt to justify non-western theatre forms by relating them to what can be considered the starting point of dominant (and eventually oppressive) high art aesthetic frameworks, it soon becomes clear that many artists (such as Cherríe Moraga and Derek Walcott) have revisited Greek myths to critique colonial authority (with its attendant heterosexist patriarchy) and ultimately empower their characters and audiences.

My main criticism of this collection is that several of the essays, especially in the first section dealing with contemporary British and American drama (represented by Mamet, Ravenhill, Frayn, and Churchill), sit uncomfortably within the overall stated emphasis on multicultural approaches to Anglophone theatre. To be postmodern is *not* necessarily to be multicultural. Furthermore, multiculturalism implies exchange and dialogue, not simply absorbing an understanding of (or even sympathy for) other cultures into a white, middle-class perspective.

Acar and Strange's valuable readings of masculinities in Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* also seemed not to belong here; while new theoretical frameworks are being applied, this is still a forty-year-old play. At the start of the new millennium, Marcia Blumberg's analysis of performances of memory, testimony, and truth-telling in post-apartheid South Africa seems far more relevant. The hybrid theatres that she discusses show us how previously silenced histories can be remembered and how the future can be negotiated and constructed through performance.

ROBERTA MOCK