

new forms of entertainment, such as revues; and the impact of new technologies in print culture and reprographics for the promotion of theatre and film industries in products such as specialist magazines and publicity materials. The book also considers how issues of censorship operated in the period both upon theatre and early cinema. Not surprisingly, the First World War looms large through the ways theatre and film worked as a tool for propaganda (especially in generating patriotism or raising fears of alien invasion) and later as a critique over the conduct of the war. Allied to this, Gale also shows how theatre directly engaged itself to the suffragette movement, together with plays and performances that both celebrated and lampooned women's involvement in the war effort.

The book also considers moves to professionalize the theatre and film industries through the establishment of drama schools for acting and film schools to develop the nascent grammar of the new art form. Not surprisingly, much of it focuses on performance cultures produced and emanating from London as the hub and nexus around which these performance industries coalesced and from which the standards and tastes were established, both nationally and far beyond, throughout the British Empire. Throughout the book Gale combines wider historical analysis with close readings from well-known plays such as *Journey's End* (1929). More frequently it is the lesser known examples taken from plays, musicals, and revues that are arguably of the most interest and come as a consequence of Gale's extensive archival trawls.

My only cavil in this otherwise engrossing book concerns the numerous photographs that are miniaturized and squeezed on to the pages in what can only be assumed as the publisher's attempts at saving space/paper. Unfortunately, this renders some of the images indistinct and at times puts the reader at a disadvantage, especially when Gale directly addresses these images in her discussions.

It is commonplace in such reviews to describe a book as a valuable contribution to its particular field, but taking Gale's opening analogy of this theatrical period as barren, her book can be seen as an act of careful cultivation from which others will subsequently plough and farm more easily than has been possible to date.

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Mark Edward and Stephen Farrier, eds.

**Contemporary Drag Practices and Performers: Drag in a Changing Scene. Volume 1.**

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Introducing the first of a two-volume series on Drag, Mark Edward and Stephen Farrier set out

the initial work's mission, emphasizing Drag's power to 'articulate a [minority] voice and subject position'. Snatching the spotlight from mainstream performances of Drag, Edward and Farrier highlight practitioners whose art traverses activism, colonialism, disability, economics, education, nationalism, race, religion, and trans-feminism. (The list continues and it is impossible to do them all justice here.) This broad spectrum emphasizes performance practitioners in their wider contexts, seeking to move beyond the assumption that 'to look at drag is to study [only] gender' and 'focus on the messy intersections of drag performance'.

Setting the stage, Joe Parslow's chapter opens the collection by noting the increased visibility given to queer culture via *RuPaul's Drag Race (RPDR)* and the consequent push and pull of Drag styles between mainstream and divergent performers. Parslow highlights that, despite the potential for an homogenizing effect to overshadow local performances of drag, *RPDR* performers such as Bianca Del Rio can add celebrity allure to local shows. Kalle Westerling's contribution is a timely exploration of the economic realities of drag practice that highlights how, while *RPDR* has opened up performance opportunities for the few, it has also set a new definition of success in the drag world as most artists struggle to maintain Drag as a full-time career.

The strength of this volume is apparent in its attention to Drag at the intersections of identity performance. Rosa Fong discusses how Zoe/Chowee Leow's interplay between gender identity and race draws from politically charged gender performances like the Butterfly Myth. While such politicized performances are not new in the world of Drag, Zoe/Chowee Leow's performances are also a way of life where identity markers highlight orientalism and colonialism as a masculine project of feminization and oppression.

Mark Edward and Jae Basiliere's chapters look beyond entertainment to focus on the educational and activist potential of Drag practice. Edward explores the establishment of an institutional approach to embodied education through his Drag study option at Edge Hill University. Basiliere demonstrates through multiple Drag Kinging workshops that masculinity is a performance that can be deconstructed and re-enacted to encourage empowerment, dialogue, and sexual education.

Raz Weiner's chapter is perhaps the most representative example of Edward and Farrier's mission in this volume as it demonstrates Drag's power to give voice to complex personal and political intersections. This chapter introduces us to Tilda Death, a drag character who draws from life experiences in Second World War Poland, Civil Rights era New York, activism with the Mizrahi Black Panthers in 1970s Jerusalem, and collaboration with Palestinian musicians in the West Bank. Despite this breadth of situations, experience, and characterization (Tilda's accent, for example, is

deliberately unplaceable), the performance is framed as an individual testimony that challenges collective memory by questioning the survivability of individuals in the face of trauma. Weiner argues that performing such witnessing on Holocaust Memorial Day at a Beit Halochem (culture and leisure centre for disabled veterans of the Israeli Army) would have been impossible had it been 'played straight', crediting the ability of Tilda's multiplicity to astonish an audience enough to allow the performance to continue.

Breaking new ground is never easy, yet Edward and Farrier have edited a collection that offers both a taste of Drag for the uninitiated undergraduate and opens intriguing avenues for the more seasoned academic explorer and/or performer. My only criticism is that some chapters feel constrained by the space requirements of an edited collection, leaving one calling for more just as the curtain falls. That, though, hints at the further revelations to come.

DANIEL NIELD