

His illumination of this loss is what makes Preiss's book so important. Its great achievement is that it evokes a theatre once so vibrant and so essentially different. He returns both clown and audience to their place of prominence even as he describes that moment as forever passed. The clown's disruptive voice can again be heard from the margins, albeit faintly and by accident. Any account of the early modern theatre should attend to those voices calling from beyond the grave and to the manifold silences of the printed page.

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Edwin Booth: A Biography and Performance History. By Arthur W. Bloom. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013; pp. vii + 358, 18 illustrations. \$55 cloth, \$29.99 e-book.

American Tragedian: The Life of Edwin Booth. By Daniel J. Watermeier. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2015; pp. xiii + 464, 25 illustrations. \$55 cloth, \$55 e-book.

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Reviewed by Lezlie C. Cross, *University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

With 2015 marking the 150th anniversary of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, attention has again turned to actor-turned-assassin John Wilkes Booth and his theatrical family. A series of popular biographies of Booth published over the past decade have chronicled his relationship with his more famous and talented elder brother, Edwin Booth, renewing scholarly and popular interest in the noted actor. Although works such as Gary Jay Williams's "Edwin Booth: What They Also Saw When They Saw Booth's Hamlet" (2011) mark the cultural importance Edwin Booth held in the nineteenth-century theatre, there has been no definitive biography of Booth, the most important classical actor on the nineteenth-century American stage. Two new biographies attempt to rectify this gap in the literature, aiming to reconcile the actor's tempestuous personal life with his long professional career.

Arthur W. Bloom's 2013 study of Edwin Booth is both a biography and an annotated performance history. In his introduction, Bloom acknowledges that his offering "is one scholar's 'version' of Edwin Booth," and this is what he delivers (1). Bloom states his intention to focus on "primary sources" and to avoid "statements unverifiable by valid documents" (1), and through his archival research, Bloom is able to dispel many anecdotal accounts propagated by Booth, his family, critics, and admirers. For instance, using evidence from broadsides and newspaper articles, Bloom disproves the story, first told by Booth's sister Asia, about Booth's first performance of Tressel to his father's Richard III. (Booth supposedly came onstage as a last-minute replacement because the prompter could or would not go on.) Bloom points out that "a broadside had to be up more than a half-hour before the performance, and Edwin had been already listed on the broadside as Tressel" (11), thereby proving that the manager had planned Edwin Booth's

stage debut in advance of the performance, even advertising it. Here and throughout, Bloom uses factual evidence to strike a balance between the inherited tradition of the “noble Edwin Booth” found in early biographies and the variable and contradictory Booth of the archive (2). He does not shrink from describing the darker elements of Booth’s temperament, such as his prejudices, though Bloom does occasionally ignore or gloss over some shameful events in Booth’s life.

It should be noted that the biography, as published, represents only about half of the material Bloom compiled. (The full text is available in the Hampden–Booth Library at the Player’s Club in New York.) In streamlining his study, Bloom makes several unfortunate omissions. Certain key events in Booth’s professional life, such as his notable collaboration with Henry Irving in 1881, receive no more than a single sentence’s notice. Additionally, though context is provided for nineteenth-century American theatrical practices—Bloom’s description of the midcentury shift from “stock” companies to “combination” companies (109), for example—the book often lacks sufficient context for key moments of Booth’s personal and professional life, such as his contentious relations with his in-laws following the death of his second wife, Mary McVicker. Bloom also excludes several details regarding Booth’s impact on the nineteenth-century theatre. He mentions Booth’s collaboration with actor Henry Hinton in the 1860s to produce a series of acting editions of his plays but then makes no mention of what Charles Shattuck in *The Shakespeare Prompt Books: A Descriptive Catalogue* (1965) calls “the more important” (8) acting editions Booth published with the help of William Winter in the 1870s and 1880s.

The real value of Bloom’s volume is the annotated catalog of Booth’s performances from 1849 to 1891, which comprises the second half of the book. Each entry provides the date, the role Booth performed, the play, and a selection from the extant reviews of the production. In these entries, Bloom records essential details, such as the cast, benefit performances, ticket prices, and the financial success of the production. Through this catalog, it is possible to trace the trajectory of Booth’s long career. Crafted through painstaking documentary scholarship, the performance calendar is an important academic contribution and will greatly benefit those interested in Booth, his collaborators, and the nineteenth-century theatre.

A more complete account of Booth’s personal life and professional career can be found in Daniel J. Watermeier’s *American Tragedian: The Life of Edwin Booth*, which Felicia Hardison Londré accurately describes on the book jacket as “the definitive Booth biography.” Watermeier’s accessible and readable text offers a full and balanced picture of Edwin Booth as a son, husband, father, and—most important—a man of the theatre. The biography is divided into eleven chapters, each of which focuses on an important stage of Booth’s development as an actor and national icon.

Throughout, Watermeier keeps “Booth’s career uppermost in this biography” and delivers details of his performances and a clear synthesis of theatrical reviews, which allow the reader to easily envision his productions (xi). For instance, he provides a comprehensive description of the “Curse of Rome,” the climactic moment of Booth’s performance of Richelieu (161). Yet, unlike other biographers, Watermeier does not assume Booth performed his roles identically

throughout his career. Instead, he shows how “Booth was constantly tinkering with the texts of the plays he performed,” and that his repertory evolved over the years, by citing reviews that documented changes in Booth’s personations (160). Importantly, Watermeier gives us the context to understand the viewpoints of different theatrical critics, identifying them, their ideological perspectives, and the papers for which they wrote. For instance, he provides the information that the German critic Otto Brahm, who appreciated that Booth’s naturalistic acting provided “just the right tone for every situation,” may have held this viewpoint as he was “already influenced by the tenets of Realism” (274).

Watermeier also demonstrates how Booth’s life experiences affected his work on the stage. Following the staggering loss of his first wife in 1863, Booth turned to Spiritualism to help him reconnect with his lost love. Watermeier records how this experience “awakened a spiritual susceptibility in him that impressed itself on both the moral purpose of his career and on his dramatic representations, deepening their emotional and psychological truthfulness” (104–5). He takes into account how Booth’s mental and physical state affected his performances: “No doubt his concentration was sometimes affected by nervousness on opening nights or by the fatigue of being both the actor-manager and star performer” (139). Additionally, Watermeier considers the full benefit, as well as the cost, of Booth’s different ventures, such as the comprehensive description of factors that lead to the loss of Booth’s Theatre in 1874 (170–5). At the close of each chapter, Watermeier provides a summation of how Booth changed as an individual and a performer during the span of years covered.

Throughout his study, Watermeier contextualizes Booth’s performances within the social and cultural landscape of late nineteenth-century America and Europe. For example, he explains how the chilly reception to Booth’s first London engagement in 1861–2 may have been due to strained relations between England and the United States over the *Trent* Affair (87). Most important, Watermeier also considers the evolving theatrical context of Booth’s career. For instance, he puts Booth’s failure as Shylock during his 1880–1 London engagement in the context of Henry Irving’s recent revival. Irving’s interpretation of the role as “an innovative ‘kindly idealization of the Jew,’” made Booth’s depiction seem old-fashioned to critics (250). Watermeier’s detailed, balanced depiction of Edwin Booth is the work of an author who appears truly to understand his subject.

My only quibble is his overreliance on certain bodies of correspondence as well as the opinions of theatrical reviewers. Watermeier is especially reliant on the letters that Booth sent to William Winter, published in his book *Between Actor and Critic* (1971). Surprisingly, Watermeier does not consider Booth’s motivations for writing to Winter, a powerful dramatic critic and Booth’s future biographer. His correspondence with Winter was undoubtedly shaped by the knowledge that Winter may have his writings made public. Nevertheless, Watermeier’s study of the preeminent actor of the nineteenth-century American theatre will doubtless be an essential biography for years to come.

Together, the two studies at last provide a comprehensive picture of Edwin Booth and his importance to American stage history. The books very nicely

complement each other. Whereas Watermeier's biography is more thorough and complete, Bloom's performance calendar is an invaluable resource to students and scholars. In fact, Watermeier proves the importance of Bloom's performance calendar, using it to help him date letters and verify performance dates. The culmination of decades of archival research, the two biographies demonstrate the significant impact Edwin Booth had on the nineteenth-century stage and on the American people.

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The First Frame: Theatre Space in Enlightenment France. By Pannill Camp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014; pp. xii + 288, 30 illustrations. \$99 cloth, \$79 e-book.

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Reviewed by Matthew McMahan, *Tufts University*

Pannill Camp's *The First Frame: Theatre Space in Enlightenment France* is an impressive achievement. Not satisfied with a *coup d'œil* or quick glance at the period, Camp employs a measured gaze that exposes the interconnected tissues among theatre, philosophy, and architecture in eighteenth-century France. His survey culminates in a complex enumeration on how "[e]nlightenment-era theatre architects represented theatre space in a new way that borrowed from optics, the physical study of light and vision" (5). The influence of optics led French architectural reformists to recalibrate the dimension, shape, and purpose of the stage in order to target the spectator's sensory experience. Camp's study, which ends with a discussion of Edmund Husserl and consciousness, not only educates its readers on theatre architecture but also provides a model for those writing about the phenomenology of the stage.

The book begins with two riddles. The first involves Claude-Nicolas Ledoux's enigmatic engraving "Coup d'œil du théâtre de Besançon" (View of the theatre of Besançon), an image of a theatre auditorium reflected in a human eye. The pupil in the engraving presents an odd contradiction. It is at once reflective and transparent. Camp believes "Coup d'œil" offers "a striking analogy between theatre architecture and ocular anatomy" (2). In other words, French architectural theorists at the end of the eighteenth century understood the playhouse "as a giant architectural eye" (2). How was this notion possible? The second riddle has a broader historical lens: What happened to perspective scenery? How did it come to disappear from modern stage design? Camp argues that the development began much earlier than most theatre histories report, commencing during "the most intensive period of theatre architecture reform in France's history," between 1740 and the French revolution (3). The book traces the conceptual evolution of these ideas.

The two riddles correspond with Camp's two audiences. While the former localizes Camp's intervention in the field of architectural studies, the latter is more broadly construed within the field of theatre history. Because of the challenge