

generation of actresses including Mrs Dora Jordan and Mrs Sarah Siddons.

In some ways it is difficult to add to a field of study that has been so well developed since the 1990s, but Brooks bring to it a contemporary approach to the reading of professional practice informed by social history and aspects of social philosophy. Her study offers much to those working on the theatrical texts of the period with her seamless shifts from the analysis of the contexts of performance and the texts performed. It is also an invaluable read for anyone interested in the ways in which we might develop models for the analysis of women's professional contributions to the theatre industry beyond the eighteenth century.

MAGGIE B. GALE

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George Home-Cook

**Theatre and Aural Attention:
Stretching Ourselves**

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. ix, 229 p.
£55.

ISBN: 978-1-137-39368-5.

The practice of listening in theatre has become a subject of critical attention, in part prompted by recent interest in the twentieth-century philosophical turn towards the ear, as, for example, in Jean-Luc Nancy's *Listening* (2007), but also because there is a surge of contemporary theatre which is made expressly for it, including Theatre-in-the-Dark and Headphone Theatre.

Some of these new forms of theatre are the subject of George Home-Cook's *Theatre and Aural Attention*, which makes a significant contribution to the theoretical field of theatre sound and audience perception. Listening in the theatre is often seen as a battle between attention and distraction. Home-Cook demonstrates how aural attention is more than a matter of paying it or not; listening is conceived as an act, a movement of stretching and attention is particularly enactive, which makes a very persuasive case for attention as generative of the theatre experience.

Adopting a phenomenological model (and developing Don Ihde and Sven P. Arvidson's work in relation to theatre analysis) the aim of this book is to explore how theatre perception takes place within 'sound as intended by design and the actualities of sound as attended', which Home-Cook explores as a process (through navigating theatre noise and designed sound in Chapters 1 and 2) which is intersubjective (for instance amidst silence, as in Chapter 3) and is dynamic and embodied (through the sensing of atmospheres in Chapter 4). Though the emphasis is on aural attention, Home-Cook advises caution when pursuing the ear instead of the eye and he opts for the more democratic listener-spectator. In doing

so he repeatedly draws attention to the futility of sensory divides, exposing the fault lines of 'sound versus sight, hearing versus vision and spectating versus audiencing'; rather, following Arvidson, he explores attention as something which takes place within a sphere of experience which is intersensorial.

Home-Cook describes attending theatre as a form of practice-based research, but states that his endeavour doesn't draw on the 'wider socio-cultural significance of these performances' in order to maintain focus on the phenomenology of listening in theatre – though I wonder what would have been at stake (to use his term) if the sociocultural contexts of these performances and of the performance of listening, were considered? That said, this is an important study that presents a number of phenomenological manoeuvres amidst theatre sound and in doing so offers a new critical language for analysis of immersive theatre practices and for articulating the audience experience.

LYNNE KENDRICK

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Kirsty Johnston

**Disability Theatre and Modern Drama:
Recasting Modernism**

London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2016,
240 p. £21.99.

ISBN: 978-1-408-18478-3.

The field of Disability Studies is currently enjoying a highly productive phase as the relaxing of earlier certainties and increasing engagement with other disciplines yield new critical directions. This volume emerges from these developments, reconsidering representations of disabled characters in modernist drama beyond the usual objections that such figures are one-dimensional villains or victims rather than fully realized individuals. Drawing particular influence from Tobin Siebers's observation that disability is a central aesthetic value in modern art rather than an incidental theme or trope, the essays here bring contemporary perspectives, informed by disability experience and scholarship, seminal playwrights and texts. The result is a volume that is richly provocative, and confronts directly the complex layers of both disability and aesthetics.

The book is divided into two sections. In the first, Kirsty Johnston offers an overview of key theoretical ideas and practical concerns that circulate through Disability Theatre, from definitions of the field, through the complexities of casting and staging, and finally on to the effects of disabled performers taking on 'iconic' roles from modern drama. In the second, scholars and disabled artists offer their own reflections on particular works. There is, curiously, a narrow range of