

# NTQ Book Reviews

edited by Rachel Clements

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Sabine Berendse and Paul Clements, ed. and trans.

**Brecht, Music, and Culture: Hanns Eisler in Conversation with Hans Bunge**

London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014.

312 p. £50.

ISBN: 978-1-4725-2435-5.

It has taken almost four and a half decades for an important book in German, *Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht*, to appear in English as *Brecht, Music, and Culture*. The English title is perhaps more accurate than the original, *Ask More Questions About Brecht*, in that Brecht is not always the central focus and wider issues are also considered and debated. The final conversation, for example, contrasts composer Eisler and Germanist Bunge's experiences of the First and Second World Wars respectively. This thematic shift appears to have little to do with the preceding thirteen conversations, but with hindsight it provides an unexpected prism through which to read the book in its entirety.

Eisler contrasts the class-based perspectives with which he entered the army with those of his interlocutor Bunge, who freely admits to his erstwhile enthusiasm for the Nazis' wars of aggression and his lack of insight into the workings of Hitler's Germany. Bunge thus differentiates himself from Eisler, and so the latter's utterances are retrospectively 'historicized', as Brecht would say. Eisler becomes an object of curiosity, whose standpoints may appear curious, dated, or even quaint today, yet it is the remarkable achievement of this book that the conversations preserve Eisler as a lively and committed commentator whose views still have something to tell us about his life and times. His reminiscences of his many and varied experiences with Brecht, and his reflections on art and socialism, provoke the modern reader with their wit, modesty, and candour.

The edition is a labour of love. Berendse dedicates the book to her father, Hans Bunge, and this affection is more than evident in the translation itself. Together with Paul Clements, she has crafted not only a readable but a highly engaging rendition of a series of conversations whose length makes them suitable for a sustained read or a more relaxed series of perusals. The editorial apparatus is largely informative and helpful, although references to the most recent German edition of Brecht should have been included. This minor niggle aside, the English edition offers rich anecdotal accounts of Brecht, the German Democratic Republic, and disquisitions on the relation-

ship between music and politics. The conversations, that span the years 1958 to 1962, live again and provide the contemporary reader with lively and unapologetic testament from a proud Marxist and Communist.

DAVID BARNETT

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Andrew Maunder, ed.

**British Theatre and the Great War, 1914–1919: New Perspectives**

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. xvi, 303 p. £55.00.

ISBN: 978-1-137-40199-1.

This book offers a timely and stimulating collection of essays, some of which provide more convincing new perspectives than others, but together make a substantial contribution to a growing field of scholarly engagement. Divided into sections – 'Mobilization and Propaganda', 'Women and War', 'Popular Theatre', and 'Alternative Spaces' – the volume covers areas from melodrama in Brixton, representations of women and work, music hall, and variety, to case studies of practitioners and practices, including Lena Ashwell and Edith Craig, British cinema regulation, Shakespeare in the war years, and entertainment in prisoner-of-war camps.

There are some excellent and well-focused essays such as Veronica Kelly's on the cultural circulations of the ill-fated Edith Cavell on stage and screen, Katharine Cockin on Edith Craig's Art Theatre in London in a 'khaki-clad and khaki-minded world', the volume editor's own essay on 'Melodrama and Suburban Theatre in Brixton 1915', and 'Entertaining the Anzacs' by Ailsa Grant Ferguson. Equally useful are Steve Nicholson on 'War on Stage' and Sos Eltis on women, war, and work, in which she accomplishes her usual sharp critique of works few have looked at since their original productions, fully contextualizing them in close readings of their relation to the complex gender politics of their time.

There is much in the volume for those who know little about the British theatre and its operations during the 1914–1918 war, and while some of the pieces are not as original or thorough in their coverage, there is also plenty for those more familiar with the period. Maunder has gathered a canny mix of essays and has done good work in making them cross-refer and connect with each other. There are some odd editorial mishaps (the assertion that Izrael Zangwill was an American goes unchallenged: he was actually an East End

Jewish activist and suffragist) and the index feels like it might have been put together in rather a hurry. But overall this is definitely a 'must have' volume for any historian of British theatre and popular culture of the first half of the century.

MAGGIE B. GALE

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Victoria Bates, Alan Bleakley, and Sam Goodman, ed.

**Medicine, Health, and the Arts:**

**Approaches to the Medical Humanities**

London: Routledge, 2014. 292 p. £95.00.

ISBN: 978-0-415-64431-0.

This book is one of a number of recent publications offering wide-reaching overviews of the field of medical humanities that also include Alan Bleakley's *Medical Humanities and Medical Education: How the Medical Humanities can Shape Better Doctors* (2015) and *Health Humanities: Medicine, Health, and the Arts* (2015), edited by Paul Crawford *et al.* It reflects the diversity of the field but also the sense of a project loosely shared with these other titles.

The medical humanities, as conceived within the fifteen chapters of the book, are pursued across a range of disciplines and practices. This book focuses, however, in its main sections on art forms – visual arts, literature, performance, and music – rather than on the perhaps more dominant disciplines within academic medical humanities of philosophy or history. At the same time, the unifying feature of the book is a concern with how the arts might constitute practices and theories of medicine/health in relation to the dominant paradigm of biomedicine.

In Alan Bleakley's and Therese Jones's context-setting chapters, this relation is characterized by the development of critical perspectives and the potential for dissent. The main sections of the book offer case studies from the UK after 1945 that explore these themes within specific contexts of practice. Of particular interest to readers of this journal, the section on performance contains an overview by Emma Brodzinski, discussing the ways in which performance and medicine reciprocally exchange and reframe human experience. This is exemplified by Brodzinski, in the critical potential offered by notions of social drama and performativity to the analysis of institutional medicine as depicted in theatre and television drama.

Jessica Beck discusses the influence of cognitive neuroscience on contemporary theatre making through discussion of work by the director Katie Mitchell, Analogue Theatre, and reflection on her own practice as a director. Phil Jones both argues for and, to some extent, realizes a similar reciprocal exchange between arts therapies and medical humanities. This book will be particu-

larly useful for students and academic researchers attempting to understand the broad context within which the arts engage with medicine. For scholars of theatre and performance interested in medicine or health, it is important both to understand the role of our discipline(s) within and in relation to medical humanities and the parallel trajectories taken by other art forms in critical engagements with medicine. This book offers invaluable perspectives on this landscape.

SIMON PARRY

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Maggie Inchley

**Voice and New Writing, 1997–2007:**

**Articulating the Demos**

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 204 p.

£55.00.

ISBN: 978-1-137-43233-9.

Maggie Inchley's book insightfully repositions the relationship between theatre and the 'New Labour' government in the UK by using the voice as a critical tool of enquiry. Inchley posits that both the ideological restructuring of the party and the new writing of this period were underpinned by a rhetoric of diversity and a desire for authentic vocal performances. By placing voice practitioners such as Kristen Linklater, Patsy Rodenburg, and Cicely Berry alongside one another, Inchley examines different attitudes within actor training scholarship regarding the impact of spontaneous emotional impulses and social histories on the voice. Additionally, she calls attention to discourse within theatre literary departments which identified new writing as 'new voices' and expressed a desire for writers to 'find their voice'. By addressing these two areas concurrently, Inchley constructively expands voice scholarship to include the work of playwrights, analyzing 'new voices' such as those of Gregory Burke, Tanika Gupta, and debbie tucker green.

The opening chapters survey New Labour's ideologies and the parallel developments in new writing and actor training between 1997 and 2007. This is followed by four case studies which respectively examine the divergent Scots voice in post-devolution Scotland; code-switching and authenticity within Black British voices; young voices in adult cultural spaces; and the relation of transgressive female voices to wider societal notions of betrayal. Within this enquiry, Inchley productively coins the term 'voicescapes' to describe and differentiate the 'dynamic material and conceptual fields of cultural audibility' that these marginal groups traverse.

Of particular note is Inchley's identification of the paradoxical inclusion of young voices in theatre spaces through adult playwrights, which reasserted a devaluation of the young urban