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BOOK REVIEWS
EDITED BY EDWARD ZITER

A Short History of Western Performance Space. By David Wiles. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; pp. xi + 316, 55 illus. $60 cloth, $24 paper.

Reviewed by Thomas Postlewait, Ohio State University

The idea of *performance space*, as David Wiles demonstrates with great historical insight and an admirable writing style, is one of the primary factors in defining, describing, and interpreting a theatrical event. If the *performer* and the *audience* are our abiding requirements for theatre, the *performance space* and *time* provide the basic context. Wiles demonstrates that each kind of performance space—he selects seven to investigate—tells us much about not only the historical features and aims of a theatrical event but also its social and political conditions. That is, for Wiles the concepts of space and time, though theoretical in their broad application, are to be understood and applied historically. History provides the temporal coordinate; place provides the spatial coordinate. Both are specific. Yet for the trained eye, each kind of performance event also achieves its spatial and temporal meanings from the recurring historical practices and patterns of theatre—culture to culture, age to age.

As his introduction makes clear, Wiles is quite familiar with the theoretical writings on the idea of the performance space. But instead of joining the theoretical debates, he prefers to offer a short survey; he then focuses his attention on the historical practices that occur in Western European performance spaces (Greek to modern). Wiles insists that the study of performance space requires a historical perspective. Influenced by Richard Southern's *Seven Ages of the Theatre* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1961), Wiles attempts to define seven basic kinds or models of performance space that recur in the history of theatre: *sacred, processional, public, sympotic, cosmic, cave*, and *empty.* (*Sympotic space*, which Wiles derives from the idea of the Greek symposium, focuses on the festive and banquet events involving food and drink, such as dining-hall performances and cabaret.) For each of those seven kinds of performance space, Wiles offers a descriptive analysis of various theatrical events, drawn from multiple cultures and ages, that fit the type. For example, the performance space of the *cave* features an enclosed space. Typically in this divided cube, which neatly separates performers and spectators, the principle of illusion, which Plato articulated in his allegory of the cave, provides the model and purpose. The idea of the cave guided the four-hundred-year development of the theatre of illusion, most fully realized by the proscenium stage. Key examples include the long, successful era of opera performance in purpose-built houses, the Italian scenic art of trompe l'oeil scene painting, the neoclassical court theatres, the box set, the realistic drama of the room, and the darkened auditorium of electricity

(including the projected film image). All of those versions of the cave space served the illusionist ideal.

Complementing his analysis of the seven spaces, Wiles provides several dozen illustrations that represent specific kinds of space. He thus uses the idea of performance space to offer a complex, if not comprehensive, perspective on the many different traditions of European theatre. I must point out, however, that these seven types of performance space are not seven distinct, mutually exclusive spaces. For example, it is quite possible to conceive of the performance space of St. Peter's in Rome being used simultaneously as a sacred, processional, and public space. For believers during a church service it is a sacred domain, for the priests marching in robes down the central aisle it serves as a processional space, and for the tourists watching and transmitting photo images with their cell phones it is transformed into a public environment. I can also imagine that a modern film director, guided by his or her secular sensibility, could perceive the architectural grandeur of St. Peter's as an empty or cosmic space to be represented cinematically in the cave space at the suburban multiplex. Many theatrical events have the traits of several kinds of performance space. The carnival, which Wiles discusses primarily under the category of public space, is also, as he realizes, often a processional event; and it may have features of a sacred event. The space is fluid in its potential identities. Wiles's seven kinds thus fail to deliver a theoretical system for defining the logical, distinct categories of the performance space. Each of the seven is capable of morphing into one or more of the others; all we need to do is change the use or change the perspective. Moreover, seven is not a magical number: no doubt it is possible to identify additional kinds of space. There is also much more to say about the place of technology in the making of spaces, including those transformed by the railroad, electricity, film, television, and the computer. In addition, though Wiles identifies modern theatre with the idea of the empty space (by way of Peter Brook), it is easy to show that all seven kinds of performance space operate in modern times. In short, the substantial value of this study does not reside in its theoretical sophistication, despite Wiles's savvy synopses in the introduction.

The historical understanding, however, is quite astute. Wiles's grasp of historical developments is impressive. Even though he limits (if that is the right word) his analysis to the long history of European theatrical practices, those traditions provide him with many striking examples. Of special note, Wiles has a fine, insightful eye for unexpected conjunctions and striking relationships. For example, the chapter on public spaces, besides featuring the Lucerne passion play, carnival in Venice, and the Agora of Athens, takes up the Cartesian world of ocular space, the concept of genius loci, and the shared ideas of Pushkin, Bahktin, and Meyerhold on public manifestations of Russian identity. Each chapter provides this kind of expansive historical perspective; each performance space achieves its meaning through an accumulative analysis. Given that method, Wiles's bibliography, along with the additional references in his notes, provides a rich record of scholarship on not only the idea of the performance space but also the history of European theatre, broadly defined.

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I recommend *A Short History of Western Performance Space* as a possible classroom text in theatre history. Wiles himself developed this study by teaching a course on performance space. The book also serves as a model for writing the social history of theatre. Wiles demonstrates that inductive analysis of the specific features of performance spaces provides fundamental clues to the social and political conditions of theatrical events. Though Wiles does not explicitly put forward a political explanation for each of the seven spaces, his approach offers some promising ways to reason from the particular spatial configurations to their contextual implications. From the inside to outside, the events reveal their historical meanings, if not their theoretical truths. To his credit, Wiles has written a fine study of performance spaces, verified by the complexity of history.

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Looking into the Abyss: Essays on Scenography. By Arnold Aronson. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005; pp. x + 236, 20 illus. $24.95 paper.

Reviewed by Stephen Di Benedetto, University of Miami

Scenography is a misunderstood term. Is it design, decor, or scenery? Scenography implies something more than the creation of setting, lighting or costumes, "It carries a connotation of an all-encompassing visual–spatial construct as well as the process of change and transformation that is an inherent part of the physical vocabulary of the stage" (7). Arnold Aronson's *Looking into the Abyss: Essays on Scenography* is a collection of sixteen essays dealing with the fundamental complexities of considering the spatial nature of the theatrical event. It approaches theatre from the perspective that every spectator encounters the theatre through the apprehension of space. Because it is often a subconscious experience, critics and theatre theorists rarely address the subject. However, these essays discuss the problems associated with encountering the instability of the scenographic object. Once we understand scenography as something we can engage as we would any other visual art, then we can consider it both as an artistic object whose symbols are worthy of decoding and as a reflection of metaphorical, social, and political hierarchies. This collection is one of only a few publications that attempts to flesh out the fundamental concepts necessary to ground any spatial examination or critique of theatrical events.

Although many of these essays were written over a decade for different audiences and often have overlapping content, they serve to create a collage that locates contemporary scenography within a historical continuum and challenges us to answer back. The book is divided into two parts: the first, "Thinking about Scenography," deals with general issues of the theory and practice of scenography; the second, "Scenography in Context," deals with the analysis of case studies using scenographic theory. Aronson grounds the place and function of the visual within performance and culture by defining scenography, contemplating

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its ever-changing need for formal and cultural transformation, and considering how the different strategies work within a range of postmodern practices.

Part I traces the ways that dramaturgical structure is influenced by scenic development and models of spatial representation. Essays such as "(Sceno)Graphic Style" place the spatial within the philosophical, social, and historical realms in which it was created and allow Aronson to chart how contemporary scenography translates methods of creating space from past epochs into contemporary idioms. In "Postmodern Design" he first situates the reader in modern design practices before he attempts to deal with contemporary experimentation. Next, "One Hundred Years of Stage Lighting: Why We Cannot Light as Appia Did," asks us to reconsider the cultural shifts through which we are going and to consider why past strategies are no longer applicable. He moves on, in "Technology and Dramaturgical Development: Five Observations" to highlight the ways that contemporary design deviates from historical development as a result of our interaction with new technologies. Additionally, he demonstrates that process historically in "Behind the Screen Door," where he charts how the simple addition of a door onstage in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* changed the pace and tempo of Greek production from a slow processional to one of rapid exits and entrances. In turn, he charts other transformations from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century to demonstrate different potentials for dramaturgical reconceptualization relative to cultural shifts.

The title essay "Looking into the Abyss" (a phrase derived from Nietzsche) deals with spectatorship, demonstrating how, through most of history, the stage is reflected in the various gazes of its audiences. He uses Michel Foucault's discussion of Velázquez's *Las Meninas* as a means to explore the role of the mirror in theatre and the cultural function that representation serves for spectators. The notion of spectatorship implies an immediate connection with the space and time of the representation. As a result, our means of understanding the visual world and the method by which the images are presented to us make us aware, in turn, of the processes of seeing and thinking.

Part II shows the potential for spatial readings of theatre events and puts into practice a methodology for describing technique and analyzing scenography. Aronson examines how scenographers make concrete abstract qualities of the world in which we live and provide practical, recognizable functional environments. For example, "Design for *Angels in America:* Envisioning the Millennium" connects literary models of analysis and visual modes of analysis by analyzing first the play's dramaturgical structure and then several designers' solutions for grounding its hypertextual qualities into a concrete playing space. He suggests the various means by which a motif or concept is found to serve as a functional world for actors to perform in, as well as a metaphorical world to suggest greater symbolic values. Other subjects range from the turn of the twentieth century, with the scenography of Chekhov and the theatrical vision of Joseph Urban, to the turn of the twenty-first century, with discussion of Richard Foreman, the Wooster Group, and David Rockwell.

Aronson considers the fundamental reshaping of perception that the world is undergoing and traces its potential implications for scenography. He sees

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theatre design as a fluid medium that must embrace the changes of the contemporary world to remain relevant to present needs. That cultural shift is no less profound than that of the Renaissance, where perspective reordered the ways that humans saw and experienced the spatial world. Furthermore, he muses on the future of theatre practice and the effect of technology upon theatre design. "The question for us, then, is how the theater—-an inherently phenomenological enterprise—-reflects back an iconography that is derived from the world of the nontangible and nonphysical" (113). The present idiom of the hypertextual and virtual is changing our notions of situating ourselves in time and space. By examining lighting practice, theatre architecture, dramaturgical styles, and the incorporation of new technologies into the theatre in the context of larger philosophical issue drawn from Foucault, Bachelard, and Virillo, Aronson's essays challenge a little-defined field with a range of questions that need to be addressed over the next few decades.

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Defining Acts: Drama and the Politics of Interpretation in Late Medieval England. By Ruth Nisse. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005; pp. 226. $23 paper.

Reviewed by Carolyn D. Roark, Baylor University

In *Defining Acts*, author Ruth Nisse joins a group of scholars increasingly interested in situating medieval pageant and mystery plays within the active political and economic milieu that produced them. Together with Sarah Beckwith, Jody Enders, and Claire Sponsler, Nisse declares the stakes of these plays to be eminently social as well as devotional. The bulk of her analysis addresses the ways in which both a civically and economically privileged mercantile class and a disempowered laboring class acquired and exercised exegetical power.

Nisse outlines her project as an investigation of the civic stakes of these religious dramas, setting out to "show how the surviving texts of the medieval stage, urban pageant cycles as well as traveling 'miracles' and morality plays, reveal a dramatic idiom deeply invested in the practices of interpretation" (2). In that, her efforts are broad and yet rigorous, addressing a variety of participants in the social interpretation of Scripture: clergy and laity, men and women, merchants, public officials, and displaced laborers.

Both the Introduction and Chapter 1, "Drama after Chaucer: *The Miller's Tale* and the Failures of Representation," offer a convincing argument that "biblical theater most threatens to get out of control at the intersection of hermeneutics and politics" (11), which in turn sets up the discourse for Nisse's exploration of how competing interpretations of Scripture reveal underlying struggles over political power and social influence. The contention that *The Miller's Tale* can and should be read as drama is less persuasive than her

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smart literary analysis of its content as destabilizing parallel to biblical exegesis. Nevertheless, Chaucer's story ultimately works as a testing ground for the analytical techniques she takes up in the ensuing chapters. Chapter 2, "Staged Interpretations: Civic Rhetoric and Lollard Politics in the York Plays," demonstrates how the producing guilds and city government of York negotiated a space in which the laity and clergy together could determine both God's law and human law in the proper management of the collective body.

Nisse's methodology is at its best in her the third chapter, "Naked Visions," which offers a thorough, engaging analysis of the problem of women as prophets and interpreters of Scripture by demonstrating how two plays—the York *Dream of Pilate's Wife* and the East Anglian *Mary Play*—make competing evaluations of female mystic's visions. In the former, Pilate's wife, Procula, represents the female whose inherent sensuality and irrationality make her easy prey to demonic influence; the latter frames Christ's mother as a sensitive and intellectually gifted individual belonging to a tradition of prophetesses, with parallels to the Old Testament psalmist David. The study draws on political responses to Saint Bridget's socially engaged writings, especially her support of the Lancaster claim to the French throne and dire warnings to Catholic authorities to return the papal seat to Rome, together with Margery Kempe's independent (and therefore unmanaged) spirituality.

In the next chapter, "Labor's End: The Wakefield Master's Poor Theater," the two *Shepherds' Play* texts and the *Buffeting* serve to address the unknown playwright's conscious move away from the productive, material foundations of other pageants toward a prophetic and critical consciousness of the poor and disempowered. Nisse offers a persuasive argument that the writer/compiler intended through this collection to challenge the civic and economic discourse of urban pageantry, and addresses the violence against Christ as a refusal or inability on the part of the powerful to read correctly the text of his body. Because of its continuity with Chapter 2, this chapter might have better fit between that and the ensuing one on female lay exegesis, with the sections exploring the cultural context of such prophecy situated in this chapter. It is also a notable omission that, although her chapter title clearly evokes Grotowski's experimental staging, she never acknowledges the parallel in her text, which discusses a performative environment pregnant with preoccupations that resonate with Grotowski's own, centuries later.

"Into Exiled Hands: Jewish Exegesis and Urban Identity in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*" (Chapter 5) playfully follows the exchange of presence and absence in a dramatic narrative that chronicles the attempted desecration of a Eucharist wafer by a group of Jews—who end up converting to Christianity in their efforts to deny its doctrine. Nisse carefully aligns Jewish interpretation and rejection of New Testament Scripture with the historical expulsion of the Jews from England, together with their continued presence in the dramatic and literary imagination of the country. In considering that particular diaspora, she also traces the religious condemnation of urban commercial and social excess through such plays.

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Chapter 6, "The Mixed Life in Motion: *Wisdom's* Devotional Politics," summarizes the book's aims through a situated reading of that play in relation to the "spirituality and spiritual pretensions of an increasingly literate, book-owning gentry and merchant class" (126). Indeed, the opposition that Nisse sets up "between interior and exterior realities, contemplation and business" (126) best describes social and religious tensions as she traces them across her field of inquiry. The great pleasure of Nisse's argument is the way she traces distinct readings of biblical narrative and religious doctrine, and examines the political and social stakes of competing interpretations offered by various players on the cultural stage of England's medieval period. Some scholars may be disturbed by the absence in her methodology of such theoretical darlings as Mikhail Bahtkin, but the author demonstrates at every step that she is widely read both within her discipline and in the related fields of history, performance studies, and theology. *Defining Acts* will interest the committed medievalist as well as the theatre generalist interested in new perspectives on medieval English drama. The study also leaves open a number of avenues for research that expand on Nisse's current project, particularly in the areas of the staging of medieval plays in urban and rural settings, lay devotional practices of the time, and the sociopolitical weight of biblical exegesis during the period.

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Gender and Medieval Drama. By Katie Normington. Gender in the Middle Ages. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004; pp. x + 158. $80 cloth.

Reviewed by Elina Gertsman, Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Katie Normington's *Gender and Medieval Drama*, considers the place of women in the English Corpus Christi cycles, performed between 1376 and 1576. More precisely, Normington locates the female presence in three distinct loci: the audience, the process of pageant production, and the semiotics of that production itself. Normington uses the Corpus Christi cycles as a case study to shed light on issues of gender in medieval drama as a whole. The author's ultimate contention—and it is the one that, in the end, convinces—is that "by examining the function of women who perpetuate cycles, it is possible to reveal the way in which women's roles within medieval society were reflected within the cycle dramas" (5).

In order to explore that connection between history and enactment, Normington avails herself of a variety of methodologies, nearly all of which she concedes to be problematic. For instance, the interpolation of response from the female audience (as well as of *any* eyewitness responses from *any* audience) is hard to achieve, and Normington grapples with that problem throughout the first part of the book by working through Hans Robert Jauss's categories for determining spectator response. The Introduction assesses the numerous difficulties with that method by highlighting discontinuities between Jauss's approach

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and the study of medieval drama, especially as it pertains to the postulated patterns of reception, discontinuities between performances and the plays, and discontinuities between cultural roles of women and the representation and interpretation of those roles in medieval drama. Chapter 1 then lays out the basic roles performed by women in the late Middle Ages in the domestic and professional realms. It is that material—and not the somewhat protracted and tortuous discussion of the method—that really seems to belong in the Introduction. Once Normington emerges from the convolutions of highlighting methodological problems, the book begins to take on a definite shape.

What follows is an examination of those roles within the framework of Corpus Christi cycles, largely in terms of a social critique of gender. Part I of the book, "Performing Gender," comprises three chapters. Chapter 2 considers women's roles as audience members and production assistants. Normington argues that women's involvement in production was minimal and was limited to tasks that did not require public appearances at rehearsals, such as making costumes and banners, tending to sick players, and providing nourishment. She contends, therefore, that that lack of public visibility, coupled, nonetheless, with the performance of tasks of ultimate importance, echoes the status of women in medieval society at least as it pertains to their place in hierarchies of labor. The discussion of women's roles as audience members—largely speculative since no records remain of female spectators shaping the performances—imagines women's reactions to Mrs. Noah's beating or Eve's transgressions. Finally, Normington examines the lack of women performers in mystery plays against the backdrop of other performances (such as certain civic pageantries) that allowed for female presence. Here, the author begins a fascinating discussion of women's roles vis-à-vis dancing—a discussion that is unfortunately cut short and that would have benefited from a consideration of the scholarship that addresses the medieval dancing body in terms of transgression. Chapter 3, one of the more cohesive sections of the book (it reads, in fact, as a separate essay), addresses issues of cross-dressing in the Middle Ages in general and in the Corpus Christi cycles in particular; Normington argues that "when men play women the distance between 'real' women and the culturally created imitations is increased" (55). Finally, Chapter 4 focuses on the consideration of the female body and its various significations, taking into account the issues of transvestism previously raised. It is a sophisticated and complex chapter, especially satisfying for the judicious consideration of interdisciplinary material: although in earlier chapters Normington's usage of medieval images as historical documents is a bit disquieting, this chapter thoughtfully addresses the complexity of issues that accompany the representation of the female body, citing the work of Caroline Bynum and Michael Camille.

Part 2, "Representing Gender," which reads like a series of case studies, offers a chapter on holy women (the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene) and another on "vulgar women" (Mrs. Noah and Dame Procula). The latter chapter is much stronger than the former, which draws no momentous conclusions (Mary's body was a site of complex significations; Mary Magdalene's image is often contradictory, but endowed with public voice and therefore overall positive).

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However, both offer a refreshing, in-depth investigation of the four female characters and their relationship with the traditional roles of women in medieval society. Here, the rushed tempo of the book slows down a bit, and the author engages in a delightful analysis of Mrs. Noah as a medieval working woman, individualistic but eventually domesticated, and of Pilate's wife Procula as a rebellious cloistered noblewoman, silenced by the male members of her family and of her court.

Normington's book raises a number of very important issues as it deals with a fascinating and complex subject. Ultimately, however, the main argument of the book—that women's roles in theater and life parallel one another—although indisputably valid, often seems strained. One yearns, too, for better editing. In addition to minor misspellings found throughout the book, there is a peculiar disparity in the writing style: the woefully choppy and brief conclusion seems to be written by a different hand from the one that penned the repetitive methodological disclaimers. That disparity manifests itself on the more important level of structure. On one hand, the chapters before Part 2, which deal with distinctly different issues, seem too abbreviated in terms of content, too teasingly short to develop fully those strands of argument that indeed would be worth developing. On the other hand, those very chapters are filled with circuitous sentences that dilute the argument instead of reinforcing it. The following excerpt is telling: in Chapter 2, Normington writes that "In order to determine the real factors that prevented women from performing in the cycle dramas, it is helpful to examine the circumstances in which they were permitted to perform." Fair enough, but that sentence is followed immediately by this one: "Through examining the wide scope of dramatic events where women did perform it should be possible to identify the circumstances that also prevented their participation." For all its stylistic problems, *Gender and Medieval Drama* nonetheless offers an undeniably useful resource for additional studies of the subject: studies that would focus on the rich and diverse issues raised in Normington's book, and develop them still further.

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Actresses and Whores: On Stage and in Society. Kirsten Pullen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005; pp. 215. $60 cloth, $24.99 paper.

Reviewed by Barbara Lewis, University of Massachusetts–Boston

The theatre has long stimulated and satisfied men visually by revealing the female form, testing the limits of public propriety. Kirsten Pullen explores the continuum between ladies of the stage and ladies of the boudoir that has bedeviled theatre in the English-speaking world since the seventeenth century. Her book focuses on the historical link between whores and seductive actresses on the British and North American stages, not including Canada, beginning in the Restoration and continuing into the twenty-first century. According to Pullen,

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both whore and actress are engaged in the profession of performing pleasure for a male clientele. They are sisters under the skin, and that familial relationship is growing closer through global technology that promotes role-playing in nontraditional venues. In addition, a twentieth-century emphasis on realistic acting has helped reduce the distance between what is seen on the streets and what is seen in the theatre, further blurring the line differentiating actress and whore.

During the Restoration, a whore was a forward woman, not necessarily one who exchanged sexual service for a fee. As women with public presence, actresses were frequently referred to as whores. They may or may not have been sexually available, but they were visually present in the public sphere. Women onstage in London at that time did not bare expanses of skin, but quite a few wore tight-fitting breeches, and boldly exposed their assets. Their attractiveness, when noticed by powerful eyes, could earn them an envied position. The first-generation actresses, exemplars of mobility in a court led by Charles II that consumed beauty, bore the brunt of antagonisms directed against women ascending to entitlement, privilege, and status sans right of birth. Attempts to maintain control and subservience were rife. Some actresses endured more than verbal assault. Rebecca Marshall, a much acclaimed founding member of the King's Company, had excrement tossed in her face after she accused another actor and a nobleman of taking undue sexual license.

The historical record, relatively slight on the experiences of many Restoration actresses, nevertheless contains telling encounters. On one hand, Marshall may have been sullied because her talent unsettled one or more males in the company. On the other hand, her decision to go public with her dissatisfaction and complain to the Lord Chamberlain about undue and excessive sexual liberties may have prompted the dousing. In either event, Marshall acted to enforce permissible behavioral limits. Her insistence that even men of rank be made to behave properly toward women contradicts the traditional image of the Restoration actress (as well as actresses in general), whom most cultural historians have described as women with little agency: they may have cavorted with men of power but they rarely if ever wielded it themselves. Pullen does not agree. Her argument is that the persona of the whore, the visible woman, constitutes a radical stance, a mask that actresses have been able to employ for increased power and representation in the seventeenth century and after.

Mae West played the kept woman in film, but she did so while in the driver's seat. She capitalized on the image of the risqué woman and made it pay. Charlotte Charke, the estranged daughter of Colly Cibber, performed and lived more on the fringes than did West. However, Charke, who like West could write, used her pen to create cultural latitude for herself. Her eighteenth-century contemporary, Margaret Leeson, a Dublin prostitute, also gained some measure of respectability through the literary mask of her memoirs. With rare exception, Pullen writes about actresses that were and are writers, including the contemporary blogger Tracy Quan, who has created an alternative character for herself in Nancy Chan, detailing her escapades in an autobiographical online journal. Quan and West, Charke and Leeson construct separate personae for themselves in

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their writing. Their talent as writers—as much if not more than their talent onstage or in the bedroom—enabled them to negotiate the stigma attached to public women. Lydia Thompson, another performer that Pullen highlights, used her writing talent as a weapon. She fought against critics who maligned her, and incorporated comic portraits of her adversaries within the narrative of her immensely popular nineteenth-century dramatic sketches. One of these was Wilbur Storey, who, in the pages of the *Chicago Times*, campaigned against what he saw as the outrageous lewdness of Thompson and her British Blondes, the troupe she led.

Although it is true that actresses have regularly accepted money to wear revealing costumes and, consequently, have participated in male fantasies, one should not overemphasize the connections between actress and prostitutes. Acting employs artifice to emphasize a larger truth, which in these truth-phobic days could be described as clarity. The prostitute employs artifice for subterfuge and obfuscation. Pullen's study is instructive not so much for what it accomplishes but for what it attempts. By positioning her inquiry in the realm of the extended limits of sexuality and the stage, Pullen has staked out an area that deserves much more investigation. Like many of the women that Pullen has chosen to include in her pages, her book is best described as provocative.

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Harlequin Britain: Pantomime and Entertainment, 1690–1760. By John O'Brien. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004; pp. xxv + 274, 19 illus. $49.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Katherine West Scheil, University of Minnesota

With its use of slapstick, physical comedy, and spectacle, pantomime flourished in eighteenth-century England and endured well into the nineteenth, influencing nineteenth-century music hall and minstrel shows, as well as early twentieth-century silent movie comedy. In *Harlequin Britain: Pantomime and Entertainment, 1690–1760*, John O'Brien attempts to reconstruct that form of entertainment and trace its importance and influence both as a leisure activity and as a popular diversion that permeated eighteenth-century British society well beyond the bounds of the entertainment world. Throughout the book, O'Brien eloquently pursues two threads of inquiry: the history of pantomime; and the cultural issues that pantomime encouraged, namely "the nature of modernity, the purposes and propriety of entertainment, the desire to comprehend and manage the population" (xxi), mainly in the 1720s and 1730s.

One of the difficulties of a book-length study on pantomime is the limited and fragmentary evidence that survives. As O'Brien puts it, "a few minutes of film of any eighteenth-century pantomime would probably tell us more than all the printed records we now have to work with" (1). O'Brien wisely confronts that problem head-on in the first chapter, "*Perseus and Andromeda* and the Meaning of Eighteenth-Century Pantomime," reconstructing that 1730 pantomime by

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Lewis Theobald and John Rich and looking at its significance for issues of theatre, performance, and spectatorship. Typical pantomimes interweave a serious plot, usually based on stories from classical mythology, with broadly comic segments featuring the character Harlequin and his attempts to procure Columbine from her father or husband through various forms of stage trickery. For example, in *Perseus and Andromeda*, the story of Perseus' rescue of the Ethiopian princess Andromeda from the sea monster alternates with Harlequin's tricks to seduce Don Spaniard's wife, Columbine. In one of John Rich's more famous gags as Harlequin, he transforms himself into a dog to enter Don Spaniard's house, where he then urinates on the leg of the dancing master. O'Brien asks the appropriate question: "What significance can we derive from such a performance, a seeming mélange of farce and myth, slapstick and song?" (10). The remainder of his book answers that question, looking at how pantomime would have gratified spectators across class divisions through its use of familiar stories and its appeal to the eye and ear.

Chapter 2, "Pantomime, Popular Culture, and the Invention of the English Stage," steps back from the specifics of the first chapter to trace the origins of English pantomime, covering such influences as continental commedia dell'arte, fair performances, and Stuart court masques. The third chapter, "Wit Corporeal: Theatre, Embodiment, and the Spectator," focuses on pantomime's use of dance, movement, and spectacle to create a new conception of the "spectator." Using Addison and Steele's *The Spectator* as a basis, O'Brien argues that the availability and dissemination of printed material, the expansion of a middle class, and shifts in the democratization of the theatre audience increased interest in "the materiality of embodied performance" and encouraged efforts to "use the human body as a way to overcome cultural difference" (63). As a form of "universal language," pantomime expanded the range of entertainment across society and could bridge differences of culture and class.

In his fourth chapter, "Magic and Mimesis: Harlequin Doctor Faustus and the Modernity of English Pantomime," O'Brien concentrates on the fall of 1723 when afterpieces based on the Faust legend premiered both at Drury Lane and at Lincoln's Inn Fields. He explores the particular importance of the Faust story for its focus on ambition and on the "magical" origins of printing as a mimetic art that rivaled the theatre. The Faustus pantomimes were also concerned with the emergence of the modern world, distinguishing a degraded present from a nostalgic past in the history of London theatre. O'Brien concludes that the rise of "a modern understanding of entertainment as a cultural product with no more serious purpose than its audience's sensual gratification" (116) was part of that process.

Midway through the book, O'Brien inserts an unnumbered and speculative "entr'acte" chapter on the Harlequin's black mask in the context of other early modern blackface performances. Summarizing this entr'acte in the introduction, O'Brien argues that the mask "functions as a kind of oblique referent to the complicated relationship between class and race" in eighteenth-century Britain (xxiii).

Chapter 5, "'Infamous Harlequin Mimicry': Apprentices, Entertainment, and the Mass Audience," looks at the growing population of apprentices, both as

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figures of performance and as spectators, perhaps the first instance of a youth culture in modern Europe. O'Brien discusses the concern with their "uncertain loyalties" and the fear that they would identify with trickster or rogue figures (Jack Sheppard and Macheath, for example), and the related question of the entertainment value of the criminal justice system, including pleasure derived from public executions.

Connections between the playhouse and politics are the subject of the sixth chapter, "Harlequin Walpole: Pantomime, Fielding, and the Theater of State in the 1730s," particularly the analogy between Robert Walpole and Harlequin (who occasionally served as a proxy for Walpole himself). The afterpieces of Henry Fielding argue for a mutual influence between the theatre and the state, as the latter resembled a form of public diversion with Walpole as a "stage manager."

O'Brien's concluding chapter, "David Garrick and the Institutionalization of English Pantomime," focuses on Garrick's contradictory relation to the form. Garrick probably began his career as a Harlequin in 1740 and profited from pantomimes in the 1750s and 1760s with his own Christmas pantomime *Harlequin Invasion* (1759); yet he publicly tried to distance himself from the form, claiming to offer pantomimes only to please the depraved audience taste he sought to reform. Through his own physical style of acting, Garrick subtly assimilated pantomime into the mainstream of the theatre.

More than a dozen illustrations, extensive notes, and a helpful index further solidify the importance of O'Brien's study. *Harlequin Britain* is a valuable contribution to the history of theatre performance and to the debate about the place and function of entertainment and its wider effects on culture. The local theatrical circumstances of eighteenth-century English pantomime are certainly worth reading about, but perhaps more important are the book's concerns with larger questions of the place and purpose of entertainment and performance in culture, and the ramifications of this influence for society as a whole.

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Revolutionary Acts: Theater, Democracy, and the French Revolution. By Susan Maslan. Parallax Re-visions of Cultural and Society. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005; pp. 275 + xii, 15 illus. $50 cloth.

Reviewed by Marvin Carlson, Graduate Center, City University of New York

The French Revolution continues to serve as a model site of analysis for scholars of modern political culture, and although the theatre has not been the primary concern for most of such scholars, works in the political-symbolic practices of the Revolution such as Mona Ozouf's *La Fête Révolutionnaire: 1789–1799* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976) and Lynn Hunt's *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) have argued very effectively for the importance in the cultural imaginary of

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symbolic activity. More recent historians, such as Laura Mason in *Singing the French Revolution: Popular Culture and Politics, 1787–1799* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), have shifted scholarly perspective, calling attention to the elitism of such earlier works, and argued for greater attention to the role of ordinary people in shaping and reacting to Revolutionary culture.

Susan Maslan's important and engaging work belongs to that latter group, but her close readings of particular moments and productions in the Revolutionary theatre culture provide a perspective on such work that is original, highly convincing, and richly illuminating. She does not argue that the works she is discussing should be reconsidered as significant works of art, but she takes a strong and well-reasoned position in opposition to the traditional Habermasian view that sees political and social agency revealed primarily in the operations of print culture, arguing instead for the importance of the theatre, the closest early modern France came to a mass culture. As the preeminent cultural form, she proposes, it was the central location for such cultural negotiation, and was recognized as such by both the authorities and the public.

Central to Maslan's argument is the tension in Revolutionary culture between representation and direct participatory democracy. Leading theorists of the Revolution, such as Robespierre, were deeply suspicious of representation, since it placed a barrier, the representative, between the direct will of the people and its realization. That ideal created a profound anxiety about theatricality, with its close association to representation. The major theoretical voice for the expression of that anxiety was of course Rousseau, whose famous misgivings about theatre were based precisely upon its representative quality, and thus its betrayal of direct expression. Maslan argues quite convincingly that the spirit of Rousseau was central to Revolutionary thinking about representation and theatricality in general and the physical theatre in particular. One of the plays she analyzes in detail is Fabre d'Eglantine's 1790 popular and critical triumph *Le Philinte de Molière*, in which he precisely followed Rousseau's advice for a more socially appropriate sequel to *Le Misanthrope*. Molière's reasonable Philinte becomes here a calculating player of a social role, while Alceste becomes a deeply sympathetic striver for transparency in social relations, a concern central to the new Revolutionary mentality. Indeed, Maslan argues, Fabre's major innovation was to advance emotional sympathy as an antidote to the theatricality and isolation of individuals that Rousseau felt was necessarily involved in any spectatorship.

Revolutionary concerns with representation and theatricality, Maslan asserts, gave rise to a concept of surveillance that was strikingly different from the idea of the totalizing and controlling gaze of both the monarchical eighteenth century and the panoptic nineteenth. Foucault has stressed the importance of that shift in *Discipline and Punish*, but Maslan argues for a caesura between the two epistemes, a brief period during which the gaze was reciprocal and power flowed both ways. That was true not only in the theatre, where audiences demanded and received a voice in the dynamic of play presentation and reception (as Maslan demonstrates with a reception history of one of the best-known plays of the Revolution, Chénier's *Charles IX*), but also in the public sphere, where

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Robespierre felt that a watchful and engaged public gaze was essential to safeguard democracy, and in the domestic sphere, where surveillance and—if necessary—denunciation of family members and neighbors exerted the same social protection. In two of the most fascinating and analytically perceptive sections of the book, Maslan demonstrates the public operations of this central cultural trope of surveillance. First she examines the implications of the popular iconic eye of surveillance in fifteen widely ranging uses of it in a variety of public documents, images reproduced in the book. Next, returning to theatre, she presents a fascinating reading of one of the hitherto never satisfactorily explained events of the early Revolution, the riots occasioned by the biblical drama *La Chaste Suzanne* at the Théâtre du Vaudeville. Maslan convincingly demonstrates that the play operated as a plea for privacy and a condemnation of surveillance, a position contradicting revolutionary ideology.

To us, on the other side of the nineteenth-century triumph of the political panopticon, of the twentieth-century domestic surveillance of the Nazis and the Stasi and the recent revelations of our own government in that matter, the positive view of surveillance, looking to Rousseau and championed by Robespierre, is so alien that we are not only unsympathetic to it, but virtually blind to the cultural manifestations in theatre and politics that were based upon it during this turbulent and fascinating period. Maslan's excellent book, by opening our eyes to that very different cultural perspective, provides a fresh and illuminating vision not only of the Revolutionary theatre and its public, but of the entire culture of which it was a central manifestation.

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Thomas Abthorpe Cooper: Father of the American Stage, 1775–1849. By F. Arant Maginnes. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004; pp. 247, 22 illus. $45 paper.

Reviewed by Odai Johnson, University of Washington, Seattle

Early American theatre is blessed with an abundance of paternity suits. William Dunlap claimed in his *History of the American Theatre* that William Hallam was the "Father of the American Stage for financing the first professional company and seeding the continent" (New York: J. J. Harper, 1832; 1: 33). A generation later, William Dunlap assumed the title himself, and he has retained it. A stronger candidate than Hallam or Dunlap, though, would be David Douglass, who built the first circuit of American theatres in the 1760s and 1770s. Now a new biography by F. Arrant Maginnes nominates Thomas Abthorpe Cooper for the role. That the field of candidates is wide and contested might alert us to the murky point of origins as the nascent American stage weaned itself of its British roots.

Maginnes's new biography is a solid, workmanlike chronicle that tracks the life and career of Cooper from his upbringing in the household of the radical philosopher William Godwin, through his apprenticeship on the provincial stage,

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his London debut, American debut, and the many years as a touring star through rising fortunes and falling. He was once the wealthiest actor in America, and not a decade later the recipient of benefits to alleviate his debts. He was British born and trained but became American; indeed, he came to epitomize the American in the way Edwin Forrest would a generation later. The attraction of the work is its thoroughness as a chronicle, leaving no review unexamined, no role unnoticed; but that calendric approach to his life is exactly the shortcoming of the work as well.

There are, of course, several previous biographies of Cooper, and the author makes some good use of them. However, there is something very touching about this new project. It began as a dissertation back in 1971 and now, some thirty-five years later, has found itself finally in print. In that regard it seems to represent a lifetime of interest that clearly informs the work, as well as a personal connection to the subject. The research offers a few new pieces of evidence, corrects a few others (like Cooper's birthday), and makes extensive use of period newspapers, letters, and family papers, and so provides the fullest account to date of Cooper's personal career as a performer. However, the dull, rhythmic march through performance after performance, review after review, of each engagement for the entirety of his career—right up to the very conclusion of the work, with hardly a side note devoted to considering the impact of such a career—gives the book a repetitive, plodding feel. In the slow march of season to season, venue to venue, one longs for a moment of quiet reflection, of expansiveness that the daily grind of calendaring performances and profits does not allow. Even the one-paragraph assessment at the close of the epilogue hardly sums up the legacy of a man whose career straddled such a nascent period. To conclude of such a career that he "contributed to the development of the American stage" is to decline to engage with the figure at its most inviting levels.

The work is hardly a wade into critical waters, and the reader must look elsewhere for a thoughtful discussion of Cooper's role in the formation of America during the Federalist period. He came to the stage in the 1790s and departed this life in 1849, spanning that formative half-century in which American culture caught up to American nationhood. One misses a conversation about the theatre's role in all that, about the social promotion of the actor (which Cooper, who married into high society, might have provided), the creation of the "star," or the theatre's involvement with the rapid expansion of the country during the Jacksonian years. Cooper was, after all, a British-born American, caught like many in the transnational conflict of 1812–14, a war that receives but a brief paragraph in this book. How he or the profession dealt with issues of nationalism finds no point of discussion in this study of American theatre's paternity. There are enticing moments that promise more, such as at the close of Chapter 11, when Jefferson has purchased the Louisiana Territory and Cooper is about to embark on a tour; but instead the conversation returns to the catalog of Cooper performances.

In the end, the book is a quietly passionate work that charts the life and career of one of America's earliest stars, written with some polish and, one suspects, great personal interest. However its usefulness to others is severely

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restricted by the narrowness of its scope (as a chronicle) and the age of its bibliography (with precious few titles dated beyond 1980). Many of the texts that went into the study seem to be the same ones deployed when the dissertation was originally written; and, though William Dunlap has not produced anything new since, many Americanists have. Some points of intersection with S. E. Wilmer's work on nationalism (*Theatre, Society and the Nation: Staging American Identities* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002]) or Heather Nathans's work on class in the formative Federalists years (*Early American Theatre from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003]) would not be out of place for an author studying an actor of such visibility negotiating both nation and class on the American stage; nor would a conversation with Don B. Wilmeth and Christopher Bigsby's first volume of the *Cambridge History of American Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)—particularly the articles on American actors by Simon Williams and Joseph Roach—unprofitably disrupt the rhythm of performances and reviews.

For fans of Cooper, the work may attain the status of definitive biography for its detail and thoroughness; for Americanists or theatre scholars who would prefer a deeper engagement of subject and field, the work will not deliver on its titular promise.

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Susan Glaspell: Her Life and Times. By Linda Ben-Zvi. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; pp. 476, 30 illus. Cloth $49.95.

Reviewed by Ellen Donkin, Hampshire College

For many of us, Susan Glaspell's one-act play *Trifles* is a landmark in twentieth-century theatre. It is not only a famous play by a woman playwright—rare enough—but it is also explicitly feminist in its intent. First produced by the Provincetown Players in 1916 (with Glaspell herself stepping in to play Mrs. Hale), the play apparently had the impact of a starter pistol. It is impossible to know in retrospect the extent to which this haunting tale of domestic abuse and murder helped rally support for women's suffrage. However, its appearance on the scene three years before the vote for women became law suggests possible connections between theatre and social change. It was a principled stand, but also a passionate one, as Linda Ben-Zvi's biography ably documents. The surprise here is that Glaspell's feminism ignited a long and distinguished career as a journalist, a novelist, a writer of short stories, and a playwright. Many of her other works, including the Pulitzer Prize–winning *Alison's House*, have all but vanished from public consciousness. Ben-Zvi's biography goes a long way toward putting Glaspell back into proper focus.

Far from being the recognized writer of a single successful one-act, Glaspell was a prolific writer whose work was at the core of artistic and intellectual debate across the first half of the twentieth century. She and her

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husband, Jig (George Cram Cook), together with Eugene O'Neill and a handful of faithful friends, constituted the heart of the Provincetown Players. History tends toward reductive formulations for the sake of simplicity, and O'Neill's name has predictably eclipsed the history of Provincetown. However, as Ben-Zvi's painstaking research reveals, the success of the Provincetown Players was a function of the larger dynamic. That group of theatrical entrepreneurs worked, wrote, produced, and socialized collectively. They drew strength from one another, they challenged each other, and they responded passionately to each other's work. They created not just a handful of plays but a series of experimental seasons, both in Provincetown and New York, which ultimately forced the New York critics to go downtown and consider how the envelope was getting stretched. Some of that history is familiar to us: for example, how in 1920 the company decided to cast African American Charles Gilpin as *The Emperor Jones*, a milestone in American theatre history. The Provincetown Players was a dynamic community engaged in the issues of the day; its members found themselves swept up in the impassioned debates, the political protests, the productions, the love affairs. It was a place to test oneself. Glaspell's presence in this unfolding process was ubiquitous. She performed, wrote her plays, kept people (especially her husband) on task, encouraged, facilitated, and wrote checks. Now, when history might conveniently position her as a gifted but second-tier amanuensis, Ben-Zvi's biography makes a very different case.

Glaspell's key dramatic works—*The Inheritors, Alison's House, The Verge, Trifles, Suppressed Desires*, and *Chains of Dew* (unpublished until very recently and, according to Ben-Zvi, Glaspell's greatest achievement) collectively articulate the urgent need for thinking about women in some new way. Glaspell herself was from the heartland: Davenport, Iowa. Her sensibility was powerfully informed by the contradictions of life for women in a community that prided itself on tradition, religion, and clearly defined gender roles. Glaspell's indignation was forged by the inequities she saw around her, both as a private citizen and as a young reporter on the local city paper. Eventually she moved to New York and became a citizen of the world, but she never lost her identity as a midwesterner or her sense of injustice. Her friends included John Reid, John Dos Passos, Hallie Flanagan, and Eva Le Gallienne, but she was always to draw on those early years. Glaspell emerges on these pages as a political watchdog: someone whose concerns for freedom and open dissent were by no means limited to issues connected to gender. However, her ability to articulate a new woman, to name aggression and sexual hunger as important parts of how we understand women, was probably her most enduring contribution.

The reviews of Glaspell's work are a powerful testimony to the struggle of making that contribution. The critics, whether they approved or scorned her work, seem not to have actually been able to absorb it. Even Brooks Atkinson, whose reflective commentary was some of the best, describes *Alison's House* (which borrowed from the life of Emily Dickinson) as having a "ladylike, decent sweetness." Alexander Woollcott, writing about *The Verge*, called its lead female character "a neurotic disagreeable cat" from which any sane man would run. Nor was it simply content that stymied the critics: Glaspell was consciously

experimenting with expressionism and that too met with resistance. Ben-Zvi comments in passing that the male critics felt disparaged by Glaspell's treatment of male characters, and made little or no effort to move past their own discomfort into the questions raised by the characters. Without critics who were able to interpret her work, the record is littered with the vituperative and patronizing comments of male critics who were simply out of their element.

Ben-Zvi herself does Glaspell the great favor of refusing to valorize her. Glaspell, unlike O'Neill, did not grow up in the theatre, and her dramatic work is sometimes labored. Ben-Zvi periodically offers her own candid assessment of these plays, without attempting to inflate Glaspell's achievement. Glaspell emerges as a canny, resilient, disciplined, and gifted writer (in stunning contrast to the men in her life, who seem constantly to be struggling with writer's block and alcoholism). She was, in other words, someone who lived the thing she wrote about. The idea of a new woman was not a passing fashion for Glaspell. It was the shape and learning curve of her life.

Ben-Zvi's research has been exhaustive, but the book never seems to labor under its accumulation of detail. The chapters, rather than simply moving forward chronologically, cluster the evidence around the major enterprises of her career, so the reading gains momentum. Also, it is exciting to discover that sprinkled through the biography are firsthand accounts of Glaspell by people who knew her, some of whom are now gone. The biography as a whole leans toward Glaspell's theatre work, making it possible to teach the history of the Provincetown Players and the history of American feminism in theatre with new attention to the contradictions and penalties of being a feminist in an industry resistant to change. The index and notes are comprehensive and essential for researchers. A chronological outline would have helped for the purposes of teaching, but this book is a remarkable achievement, a complex and balanced offering that has the effect of letting this period of American theatre history unfold slowly. In the end for Glaspell, there is old age, illness, and solitude, but our sense of her as a writer and thinker never wavers.

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Expressionism and Modernism in the American Theatre: Bodies, Voices, Words. By Julia A. Walker. Cambridge Studies in American Theatre and Drama, Cambridge, 2005; pp. 300. $85 cloth.

Reviewed by Edmund Lingan, New York University and Baruch College

In *Expressionism and Modernism in the American Theatre*, Julia A. Walker argues that American expressionism is rooted in the theory of speech educator S. S. Curry and that the influence of German expressionism on authors such as Eugene O'Neill, Elmer Rice, John Howard Lawson, and Sophie Treadwell has been overstated. Walker acknowledges that German expressionism appeared in the United States with Weine's film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1921) and also

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with the theatrical premieres of Georg Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight* (1922) and Walter Hasenclever's *The Son* (1925). However, Walker asserts that an American school of expressionism existed prior to those productions, in Curry's "theory of expression."

Walker explains that Curry's theory was "well known to all who came of age between the 1890s and 1910s" in the United States. Curry drew upon the work of Delsarte, and, in Walker's words, insisted that "communication was not a function of the voice alone but a whole bodily process that depended upon the perfect coordination of all three 'languages' of the body—verbal, vocal, and pantomimic." According to Walker, Curry's theory of expression inspired an American "expressive culture movement," which was a "broad-based program of personal and social reform advocating the performing arts as a means of overcoming the alienating conditions of modernity." That alienation was caused in part by technologies such as film, sound-recording devices, and the typewriter, which isolated speech, gestures, and words. Walker stresses that those technologies seemed to threaten the body as a location in which the various aspects of human expression were naturally coordinated, and she sees Curry's proposal as an assertion that through participation in music, drama, and dance, "students could recalibrate their body's natural rhythms to a state of harmony with the spiritual universe and thus counter the alienating conditions of modern life" (5 [all quotations]).

Walker explains that Curry's theories were popularized throughout the United States as a pedagogical model for high school and college literary instruction, and proposes that those theories were so prevalent that O'Neill, Rice, Lawson, and Treadwell would most likely have been familiar with their central ideas. In some cases, she suggests that those playwrights may have been familiar with and/or educated in Curry's actual theories. In her chapter on O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape*, Walker induces from O'Neill's ability to recite large amounts of poetry from memory as an undergraduate at Princeton that "like most Americans of his generation, O'Neill was well versed in Curry's theory of expression" (266). She notes moments in which each of these playwrights isolated voices and rendered characters' movements mechanical, and argues that they intentionally dislocated the elements of human communication described by Curry to give aesthetic shape to their modernist concerns and anxieties.

In order to make her argument, Walker must instruct the reader in some of the specifics of Curry's theories of expressions, for, as she states, those theories are a "failed idea," which has been "erased from cultural memory" (6). The Introduction to Part I of the book therefore delineates and effectively conveys several of Curry's ideas, and it prepares the reader to consider those teachings in relation to the ideas presented in the rest of the book, including the theatrical work of the playwrights examined in Part II.

Part I contains three chapters. In Chapter 1, "Bodies: Actors and Artistic Agency on the Nineteenth-Century Stage," Walker discusses the decline of the nineteenth-century "point"-based system of acting and the loss of the artistic agency of the actor in relation to acting for film. Walker views the point as a tool

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that allowed the actor to place emphasis on a certain line or indicate underlying meaning during his or her performance. In certain moments, that made the actor as powerful as the playwright in the presentation of the dramatic text to the public. The loss of this tool, according to Walker, decreased the actor's ability to produce meaning. The actor also lost agency in silent film, because his or her voice disappeared, and the director had the power to emphasize certain parts of the actor's body through the editing process.

Walker suggests that those changes were symptomatic of an ongoing trend that took power away from the actor as the primary creator of meaning in nineteenth-century theatre. Chapter 2, "Voices: Oratory, Expression, and the Text/Performance Split," argues that the exploration of new dramatic forms in the early twentieth century contributed to the growing perception that the playtext (and not the performance) is the source of meaning in the theatre. Chapter 3, "Words: Copyright and the Creation of the Performance 'Text,'" examines the development of copyright laws that distinguished between performance and written texts as two separate media with the potential to be duplicated for commercial purposes. By 1909, live performance, recorded performances, and written texts were all legal entities that were protected by copyright laws, and Walker discusses the problem that that recognition presented to "modern dramatists with literary aspirations," who were "caught between an anti-performative bias and the performative medium of their craft" (83).

In Part II Walker analyzes plays that she feels are primary examples of American expressionist works rooted in Curry's theories. Chapter 4, "The 'Unconscious Autobiography' of Eugene O'Neill," examines *The Hairy Ape* and *The Emperor Jones.* Chapter 5, "Elmer Rice and the Cinematic Imagination," considers *The Adding Machine* and *The Subway.* John Howard Lawson's *Processional* is the central topic of Chapter 6, "'I Love a Parade': John Howard Lawson's Minstrel Burlesque of the American Dream," and Walker examines *Machinal* in Chapter 7, "Sophie Treadwell's 'Pretty Hands.'"

Expressionism and Modernism in the Modern Theatre is an ambitious book, for it attempts to acquaint the reader with an educational theory that is for the most part forgotten, and to show that some of the greatest playwrights of the United States drew inspiration from that theory in designing the content and form of their plays. The book accomplishes the latter task through close readings of plays. However, I longed to hear more about how the physical productions of these dramas might have related to the expressive culture movement. When Walker does make connections between plays and performance—such as when she explains that O'Neill chose the actor, boxer, and football player Louis Wollheim to play Yank in *The Hairy Ape* because he believed that only Wollheim had "by nature the right manner" (150)—she demonstrates that, in addition to playwriting, the expressive culture movement made a powerful impact upon directing, casting, and acting.

Walker proves that Curry's theories and the expressive culture movement that they inspired were at least as significant as German expressionism in the shaping of expressionist drama in the United States. This book will provide

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insight to the student or scholar who is interested in discovering new approaches to modernist theatre in the United States.

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Clifford Odets and American Political Theatre. By Christopher J. Herr. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003; pp. xii + 177. $55 cloth.

Reviewed by Garrett Eisler, CUNY Graduate Center

Clifford Odets is a playwright with whom American theatre historiography has yet to come to terms, even in this his centennial year. Celebrated as a fashionable radical in progressive times, decried as a sellout and has-been in later days, he has suffered from an overattention to his mystique and underappreciation of his written output. While *Waiting for Lefty* and *Awake and Sing!* have been widely anthologized and subsumed under reductive genres (like agitprop and "kitchen sink" realism), the rest of his complex oeuvre reveals an unpredictable writer constantly stretching form and delving more deeply into the darker regions of the human soul. Past studies have tended toward the purely literary or, in the case of Margaret Brenman-Gibson's still "definitive" 1981 biography, *Clifford Odets: American Playwright: The Years from 1906 to 1940* (New York: Atheneum, 1981), only focused on his life up through the end of the Group Theatre.

Christopher Herr's *Clifford Odets and the American Political Theatre* is the first new monograph on the playwright in over a decade and is unique in looking at his complete career exclusively from a political and cultural perspective. It attempts to redress the underrepresentation of Odets in the academy by offering a new paradigm for the study of his work, reexamining it within the socioeconomic context of the market-driven conditions prevalent in the Broadway and Hollywood industries in which he worked. Finding political significance far beyond the explicit polemics of *Lefty*, Herr claims that Odets's entire oeuvre "parallels and participates in a radical questioning of the entire American ethos" (1) across the changing times of the 1930s–1950s. In answer to those who discount Odets as an unfulfilled writer who compromised himself and ended in decline, Herr proposes "a reevaluation of the idea of the 'sellout' in the context of commercial society" (34). He convincingly portrays Odets as a writer engaged in a complex struggle with the market forces and popular culture of mid-twentieth-century America. Despite his title, the book is not about any general tradition of "American political theatre" per se nor does it offer a survey of such; but it does make use of Odets as a case study in the possibilities and limits for politically informed drama within consumer capitalism.

Herr divides Odets's life (1906–63) into three periods—youth, Group Theatre, and post-Group—providing background chapters on political and economic developments in American society at large in each of those periods followed by close readings of Odets's plays. Chapter 1, for instance, recounts

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Odets's coming of age alongside the backdrop of the Jewish immigrant experience of the turn of the century, the economic optimism of the 1920s, and the flourishing of a new American drama at the Provincetown Playhouse and the Theatre Guild. In the discussion of Odets's famous Group plays, Herr focuses especially on the role of "market forces" and "abundance" (particularly images of food and fruit), finding a "near-obsession with the idea of the marketplace—which deals in people as well as commodities" (2). Drawing on Keynesian theories of consumption, as well as the persisting potency in the period of myths of "the frontier" and Horatio Alger, Herr persuasively analyzes the multiple "financial and moral" forces acting on Odets as he quickly rose to prominence as a star wunderkind dramatist. One of Herr's freshest insights is his portrayal of the Group as a constricting force in Odets's career, nearly as exploitative in its commercial demands on him as Hollywood studios would later be.

The apparent shifts in Odets's dramaturgy and themes after the Group's dissolution, Herr argues, directly resulted from the commercial failure of the Group and the new pressures exerted upon Odets's art from Hollywood, his artistic home for much of the remainder of his life. In the 1950s, amid a reactionary backlash, when the gulf widened between perceived "highbrow" and "lowbrow" culture, "Odets's dream of a democratic, collective art . . . was increasingly out of step with the times" (129). Nevertheless, Herr claims, Odets succeeded in his now-neglected late plays—*Big Knife, The Country Girl, The Flowering Peach*—in forging, despite some excesses, "a political theatre from the objects of everyday life" (2). Herr rightly reminds us that the last two of these attracted considerable praise in their time, reviving their author's status as a viable dramatist until he left the New York theatre again in 1955. In this way Herr offers a fresh answer to the question inevitably facing anyone taking on this playwright: What *happened* to Clifford Odets?

At a mere 150 pages (including notes), this book understandably focuses on Odets's most well-known (i.e., Group Theatre) works; Herr asserts the importance of the later plays but devotes only ten pages to the final three. Such brevity is especially disappointing considering the considerable archive of unproduced and unfinished Odets plays and films still awaiting exposure. Herr does make isolated use of private journals and correspondence and occasionally references what was to be Odets's labor epic *The Silent Partner*, a manuscript that seems essential to assessing the playwright's political seriousness. Herr's inclusion, though, of some of Odets's more accomplished film work (*None but the Lonely Heart*, *Sweet Smell of Success*) is most welcome in illuminating his post-Group worldview.

While Herr's book may not be the extensive critical overhaul or archival study of Odets that is so badly needed, he achieves a necessary prerequisite for that reassessment in the post-cold-war era by reframing the "sellout" problem that has plagued this dramatist's reputation. (His three-page conclusion on "Odets's Legacy" only hints at a larger project for others to take up.) Despite the lack of new historical revelations, the book deserves the attention of specialists by staking a new claim on Odets's significance to American political drama and by bringing to bear on it a wide and updated range of social theory, from

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Benjamin to Baudrillard. Herr is also in a position to review previous scholarship and to provide a new historiographic perspective. After a long lull, this book is evidence that the critical conversation on Clifford Odets is far from over.

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Arthur Miller: A Critical Study. By Christopher Bigsby. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005; pp. x + 514. $85 cloth, $29.99 paper.

Reviewed by Alan Ackerman, University of Toronto

It is rare to find a balanced, critical assessment of Arthur Miller. The difficulty can be attributed in part to Miller's celebrity from his earliest theatrical successes, *All My Sons* (1947) and *Death of a Salesman* (1949), to highly public events in his life—such as his marriage to Marilyn Monroe and his appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee—that he addressed both inside and outside the theatre. However, in large part Miller has provoked widely varying responses from critics and reviewers because of the moral earnestness of both his writings and his public pronouncements on various subjects and his apparently unrelenting seriousness. He thought of himself as a modern-day prophet, writing in his essay, "The Question of Relatedness," that *All My Sons* is "a play written for a prophetic theater" (Harold Bloom, ed., *Arthur Miller's "All My Sons": Modern Critical Interpretations* [New York: Chelsea House, 1988], 9). Such has been the force of his self-fashioning that he has largely been accepted or rejected on his own terms. He is celebrated by some as the great American playwright and dismissed by others as workmanlike and didactic. Since the modest financial and critical success of his play *The Price* in 1968, Miller did not have another hit on Broadway for thirty years, until the powerful revival of *Death of a Salesman* in 1999. That success—combined with his selection as the most significant playwright of the twentieth century in a poll of British theatre professionals and followed by his death on 10 February 2005—has deservedly prompted critical reassessment.

Among the works well positioned to secure Miller's legacy is Christopher Bigsby's monumental *Arthur Miller: A Critical Study.* Bigsby has already authored several surveys of American drama, in which Miller figures prominently, as well as coedited *The Cambridge History of American Theatre*, and his knowledge of Miller in particular is prodigious. His new book is a testament to his years of research and his devotion to the playwright. This richly sympathetic work, moreover, testifies to the influence of the playwright on his critics. Ultimately, Bigsby suggests, quoting Miller, that in "every man" there is "a core, an identity" that he cannot give up, and in Miller's case, "it is his writing, his one true religion, though that in turn serves something else: his belief in the capacity of a flawed humanity to construct meaning, and the necessity for the individual to acknowledge responsibility for his own fate and the state of his society" (489). Bigsby's comprehensive work of criticism reverentially pays tribute to the playwright in his own terms.

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The scope of Bigsby's knowledge paradoxically compromises the book, for it is a sprawling study that attempts to examine everything that Miller ever wrote. One chapter is devoted not just to the plays Miller wrote as an undergraduate at the University of Michigan but to every rough draft of every undergraduate play. That exhaustive treatment will make the book useful as a reference work, but few will wish to read it through, and individual chapters are often rambling and repetitious. The lack of structure is especially ironic since Miller is renowned principally as a craftsman and master of structure, as Bigsby notes in a remark that applies unintentionally to his own book: "Beat literature . . . seemed to Miller to produce texts that appeared to spin out of themselves, to be generated moment by moment. They had no more form, no more sense of direction, than the road that the protagonist frequently followed" (182–3). Such is *Arthur Miller: A Critical Study*. There is a valuable book buried inside this one, but Bigsby seems bent on showing that Arthur Miller is important (comparable to Shakespeare), at least in part through the sheer mass of his own study. While he occasionally notes inconsistencies in Miller or may suggest how a scene added for a production of *The Crucible* "risks turning Abigail into a pathological case" (153), there is little sustained analysis or engagement with the most significant criticism. The work would more aptly be subtitled *An Appreciation* than *A Critical Study*.

Miller's well-known emphasis on personal responsibility and themes of innocence and guilt are here represented, as is the familiar and inconclusive discussion of Miller and "tragic drama." On one hand, Bigsby writes, "it hardly matters whether these plays are seen as tragedy or not" (207). On the other hand, he adds, "The fact is that the discussion of tragedy throws as much light on Miller's state of mind and the state of the culture . . . as it does on individual plays" (210). But in spite of Bigsby's wide range of references, there is little sense of how Miller's oeuvre relates to American literary or cultural history. In recent years, many have suggested that Miller has been more appreciated abroad than at home. Bigsby remarks, for instance: "Curiously, he had fallen out of favour in his native America for the previous thirty years. His new plays were not well received, even as his classic plays of the 1940s and 1950s were taught in schools and universities and regularly revived" (1). Bigsby is not alone in lamenting that Miller is more appreciated in Britain than in the United States, but to examine why that is the case would require a rigorous historicizing of both Miller's plays and the critical response they engendered. Bigsby, who is Professor of American Studies at the University of East Anglia, would make an important subject of such a study, though he does not begin to undertake it himself. *Arthur Miller: A Critical Study* presents a useful narrative history, but it would serve an even more pressing need in the critical field were it to interrogate the historicity of its own claims and terminology.

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Bertolt Brecht's Dramatic Theory. By John J. White. Studies in German Literature and Culture. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004; pp. 348. $90 cloth.

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Staging History: Brecht's Social Concepts of Ideology. By Astrid Oesmann. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005; pp. 231. $65 cloth.

Reviewed by David Krasner, Yale University

John J. White and Astrid Oesmann provide much more than a survey of Bertolt Brecht's major themes. Both books seek to debunk the simplistic and regrettably conventional method of dividing Brecht into three stages: an experimental early period (ca. 1919–27); a middle phase, which produced his *Dreigroschenoper* (*Three Penny Opera*) and Marxist *Lehrstücke* ("Learning Plays," 1927–32); and the mature era in which Brecht, primarily in exile (1933–48), wrote his epic plays and theories. The approach each book takes, however, could not be more different. White's study attempts to locate Brecht's exile as motivating his complex and often contradictory theories. Exile, White explains, forced Brecht "to establish himself afresh in a variety of host countries," yielding "a distinctly beneficial effect on the nature and construction of Brecht's theoretical position" (8). White acknowledges that "Brecht's theorizing thrived on adversity" (9). Oesmann, by contrast, makes the case that his formative period, which occurred during the Weimar era of the early to mid-1920s, established Brecht's ideas that remain relatively consistent. Brecht's "supposedly inferior early work enriches our understanding of his entire career as a playwright" (2). For Oesmann, the seeds of Brecht's later work took root in the early plays and stories, in particular *Trommeln in der Nacht* (*Drums in the Night*), *Im Dickicht der Städte* (*In the Jungle of the Cities*), *Mann ist Mann* (*Man is Man*), and the collection of one-acts, *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches* (*Fear and Misery in the Third Reich*).

White maintains that Brecht's exile created "the predicament of being a relatively unknown quantity, a fish out of water, in situations where he had to explain himself" (9). Each new location forced Brecht to establish new representative tropes for a new audience. That uprooting, however, produced valuable results: instead of a gestalt, Brecht's theories comprise a patchwork. This assessment does not necessarily contradict the three-phrase theory, but it does suggest that changes in Brecht's theories were more flexible than previously supposed. Brecht's dramatic theory, White says, "is by no means fixed" (122).

White's book examines various stages of Brechtian theory, including Brecht's method of combating ideological inertia; the attempt to disengage empathy from an audience's repertoire of responses; his poems, which illuminate his notion of *gestus* (social attitude); history in Brecht's "Kleines Organon für das Theater" ("Short Organum for the Theatre," 1948); and his unfinished *Messingkauf* project (1939–56). Each stage reveals, when analyzed, multifaceted attempts at self-clarification; Brecht, White contends, used other theories as a means of defining his own. For instance, White's chapter on epic theatre highlights Brecht's well-known dual-column schema in the *Mahagonny* notes, which distinguishes between, on the one side, what Brecht deems audience passivity and identification via Aristotle (dramatic theatre) and, on the other, Brecht's antithetical approach (epic theatre). White subjects the columns to a

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detailed exegesis, asserting that Brecht sought a subtle shift in emphasis rather than a wholesale denial of Aristotelian distinctions. By emphasizing montage and each scene for itself rather than continuity and empathetic emotional flow characteristic of Aristotelian drama, Brecht incorporated a dialectical comparison of dramatic and epic theatre that established a fluid interrelationship rather than a nonnegotiable fault line.

White analyzes Brecht's concerns with the influential Stanislavsky-based theatre that had advocates both in the United States and the Soviet Union. While Brecht's "immediate reactions to Stanislavsky's writings are largely in the form of scattered aperçus and half-digested insights" (86), in that regard he appears to have looked eastward for theses from which to construct antitheses contravening, or at least toning down, the histrionics associated with Stanislavskian acting. Like Aristotle, Stanislavsky served as a kind of foil for Brecht in his effort to clarify his theories. Furthermore, in order to combat the "bourgeois theater's essentialist emphasis on timeless verities" (96), Brecht sought a combination of estrangement and historicity; the actor must select the "telling detail" of a play's social context and, through certain choices, provide "a sense of historical specificity" (98). By emphasizing proportionality—the "actors' ability to maintain 'die richtige distanzierte Haltung' [the correct distancing attitude] to their parts" (109)—the actor awakens the audience to alternative actions. Estrangement "in the primary meaning of Brechtian 'Verfremdung' (i.e., 'making strange'), refers to the means of creating a different state of mind: a politicized critical distance" (117). That critical distance provides the breathing space necessary for rational observation.

Brecht's poetry serves as a point of departure for White's investigation into Brecht's concept of *gestus* and the basis of proletarian theatre. White takes up a number of subject matters, including the debates over formalism, the need for the proletarian theatre to be at the vanguard of revolution, Brecht's work on Gorky's socialist book *Die Mutter* (*The Mother*), and primarily, as White says, Brecht's novel belief that "Whereas much contemporary theater, with its arcane rituals and its obsession with transforming character, actor, and audience into a symbiotic entity, is a place of mystification, everything happening in the street is open to inspection and confirms commonsense" (164). Brecht's call for "die Vorgänge hinter den Vorgängen [the course of events behind the course of events]" (165) creates a theatre of reason and adjustment.

In the final two chapters White analyzes Brecht's two major theoretical works, "Kleines Organon" and *Der Messingkauf*. White calls attention to the fact that these works offered an alternative to prevailing theatrical ideas. There was also on Brecht's part a subtle critique of an Eastern European theatre gradually coming into the orbit of Soviet Socialist Realism. The "Organon," White surmises, addresses a patchwork of elements, including such problems as the catatonic audience, the bourgeois theatre's pandering to the audience's puerility, aspects of the scientific age, the theatre's ability to historicize, and the didactic process of observing critically. White subjects the *Messingkauf* to similarly detailed attention. Brecht challenged the cultural iconicity of Stanislavsky and the state-enforced Socialist Realism with subtlety and nuance, employing such

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terms as *falsches Bewußtsein* (false consciousness, borrowed from Engels's 1893 statement) that helped modify his critique of the prevailing wisdom while still saving face with Soviet authorities. White is admirably not squeamish in criticizing Brecht for obfuscation and failure to work out the details of each idea.

Oesmann's study maintains that "Brecht's writings during Germany's Weimar Republic should be seen as a coherent whole" (1). Rather than viewing Brecht's theories, as White does, as part of a jigsaw puzzle that fails to cohere seamlessly, Oesmann asserts that the emphasis on survival in Brecht's early plays establishes a kind of through line to his later fully fleshed-out characters in the epic dramas. For instance, Andy Kragler, the reluctant hero and victimized prisoner of war in Brecht's *Drums in the Night*, is a precursor to Galileo in that each chooses survival over martyrdom within their respective authoritarian worlds.

Like White, Oesmann attends to several topics, including comparing Brechtian theories to the theories of Adorno, Lukács, and Benjamin; examining tragedy and memory in *Drums in the Night* and *In the Jungle of the Cities*; and considering the social construction of the individual in *Man Is Man* and the lengthy diatribe in Brecht's *Dreigroschenprozeß* (*Threepenny Trial*). Oesmann also provides an examination of revolutionary consciousness in the *Lehrstücke*, and her last chapter focuses on Brecht's "Archeology of Knowledge" in his unfinished work *Fatzer*. Among many strong points, Oesmann is particularly insightful in defending Brecht's thorny learning play, *Die Maßnahme* (*The Measures Taken*). The play has frequently been condemned for justifying the execution of a well-intentioned but flaky revolutionary whose irresponsibility jeopardizes his proletarian comrades. For Oesmann, the violence against the wayward revolutionary is part of Brecht's metaphorical rather than literal condemnation of individualism. The playwright's aim was not so much to show bloody retribution but rather to demonstrate that revolutionary activity partakes in "being and remaining part of the collective that is committed to revolution precisely because collectivity opens the social space in which perception and understanding can take place." Only the collective can provide "the foundation for the simultaneous interchange between thought and action that alone can transform society" (154). Oesmann also offers a useful description of Brecht's notion of the body as a repository of transhistorical truth. Brecht believes that theatre makes transhistorical truths possible "because it allows people to practice the required art of perception." The body can be perceived only "in social settings in which multiple bodies interact. The stage provides a limited and controlled space for the observation of such interaction, and Brecht develops his concept of *gestus* to describe the ways in which bodies signify these transhistorical truths" (192–3).

What both works very clearly do is leave the reader with a palpable sense of Brecht's ideological commitment and dramatic theory. Given the vast material that had to be covered and the many ideas that needed to be juggled (only some of which have been noted here), it is a testament to both writers' skills that they are able to keep all the balls in the air in the formation of an engaging narrative.

White's book lacks English translations of Brecht's texts, which will limit its readership. This is unfortunate because it deserves as wide an audience as possible, especially in light of the 2003 publication of the 30–volume *Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe* (Major Annotated Berlin and Frankfurt Edition), which White takes into account. Neither book would have suffered by having a concluding chapter. Still, they well serve their intended audience.

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All Theater Is Revolutionary Theater. By Benjamin Bennett. Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2005; pp. xiv + 241. $39.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Andrew Sofer, *Boston College*

Benjamin Bennett decries literature as corrupt and illogical. That does not mean that books are bad for us. Rather, literature relies on genres (or "types") for hermeneutical coherence, and because genres blinker literary meaning in advance, literature (especially in its post-eighteenth-century manifestation as a stalking-horse for nationalism) is inherently conservative, whatever the politics of its adherents or its effect on readers. In taking aim against "literature" as concept and institution, Bennett challenges the hermeneutical bind according to which, once we view literary meaning as fixed, we neutralize the possibility that it can canvas historical change. The only hope of bridging literary meaning and "brute reality," of escaping the hermeneutic circle, lies in disruption from within. Fortunately, due to a category error made by Aristotle and his epigones, literature has unwittingly ingested the alien that, once recognized, can gnaw its way out. The revolutionary weapon Bennett wields against literature—one erroneously viewed as a literary type for over two millennia—is drama. Since drama is not really a literary type but a virus that destroys the coherence of poetic types "by way of its indissoluble association with the brute materiality of theater," all theatre (or, more precisely, all scripted "dramatic theater") is revolutionary theatre (8).

It follows that releasing the revolutionary potential of drama need not involve considering "'what actually happens' in the theater" (96), but, rather, reading closely and painstakingly. In a succession of author-centered chapters, refractory modernist texts are shown to posit meaning at one level only to confound it at the next. Thus Brecht's writing, as much as Artaud's, "challenges its own conditions of writtenness" and constitutes the nearest thing to revolution in modern drama (59). Wedekind's *Spring Awakening* and Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* presume "the strict inaccessibility or absence of the subject in the theater" (85). And while Büchner's drama implicitly theorizes theatre not as imitation of a prior reality but as a revelation of human identity as always already an imposture, Hofmannsthal's "centerless" theatre of adaptation sets out to demonstrate that "theatrical drama has no meaning" (118). For Diderot, Shaw,

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and Beckett, meaning is suspended between play and text, such that we are forced to confront the fragmentation of human identity. And in the "limiting cases" of Genet and Beckett, actors' bodies are "subjected to a merciless hermeneutic or textual bludgeoning that in the end reveals not so much the power of text as its failure, its defectiveness, its futility" (193). If Hegel breaks the hermeneutic circle at the level of history, Bennett breaks it at the level of undecidability.

Through its series of Pyrrhic victories against faith in transcendent truth and identity, modern drama would seem to perform what Harold Bloom calls *kenosis*—a self-emptying that hollows out literature as a whole—but at the price of aporia. That may explain Bennett's otherwise puzzling statement that, despite the book's thesis and subject matter, "[i]t would be in a sense unfair of the reader to require me to show a clear instance of revolutionary operation in modern drama" (57). The best we can hope for from drama is not "a new breed of politically improved human beings" but a radical questioning of ourselves (163). Although it would be wrong to seek evidence of theatre's revolutionary potential in actual political effects, in the long run "the institution as such cannot help being revolutionary, even where the people who use it and the material represented in it are decidedly conservative or reactionary" (193). To paraphrase Stephen Greenblatt: there is revolution, no end of revolution, only not for us.

Bennett's final chapters turn from playtext to performance. "Performance and the Exposure of Hermeneutics," the chapter likely to be of most interest to performance theorists, argues that "the revolutionary quality of theatrical drama . . . can be understood in terms of its *resistance* to hermeneutic space," the totality of the text as constructed by hermeneutic thought (210). The very materiality of bodies and props punctures semiosis, even as "the perfect *systematicity* of hermeneutics" absorbs that messy materiality back into representation (168). Last, Bennett examines whether the "post-dramatic theater" of Robert Wilson should be considered more revolutionary than text-dependent dramatic theatre and ingeniously argues that in order to view Wilson's theatre as revolutionary, we must show that it is a species of drama after all.

In *All Theater Is Revolutionary Theater*, Bennett sets out to discredit the hermeneutic desiderata of a transcendental subject (derived from Kant) and of transcendental meaning (derived from Husserl) without losing faith in hermeneutics as a valid philosophical framework for literary exegesis. He is too scrupulous a thinker not to ask: "to what extent is a 'problem' really a problem if a specific disciplinary structure is required to maintain it, to keep it open, *as* a problem?" (170). Skeptical readers may suspect that, for all the sheer intellectual firepower on display, the difficulty in realizing theatre's revolutionary potential may lie less in the innate conservatism of literature than in the oppressive circularity of the hermeneutic enterprise itself. Nonetheless, anyone who believes that modern drama and post-Kantian philosophy can have a mutually edifying relationship should read this learned and thought-provoking book.

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Blackface Cuba, 1840–1895. By Jill Lane. Rethinking the Americas. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005; pp. xi + 274. $55.00 cloth.

Reviewed by Jean Graham-Jones, City University of New York

Blackface Cuba, 1840–1895, by Jill Lane, is a welcome addition to nineteenth-century Latin American cultural and theatre studies. Lane addresses the role of blackface performance in the development of Cuba's national identity: "Why and how was Cubanness imagined through blackface? How did blackface insinuate itself into the very center of Cuba's national 'soul'?" (2). This study of "the relation between writing, blackface performance, and racialized national identities" (ix) provides an intriguing view into the deeply ambivalent construction of an imagined Cuban nation as the island moved from Spanish colonial and slave-based economies to anticolonialism, the abolition of slavery, and eventual independence.

Following an Introduction, the book's first three chapters chronologically trace this move. Chapter 1, "Blackface *Costumbrismo*, 1840–1860," examines Cuba's "authentic" naturalistic sketches of local customs and types through the one-act *sainete*, the dominant *costumbrista* theatrical genre of Spain and Latin America, noted for its depictions of popular life. During Cuba's extended colonial history, *costumbrista* performances became allied with anticolonialism as white Cubans (and their slaves) attended performances where white actors performed in black- or brownface. *Costumbrista* arts remained firmly in the hands of the urban Cuban *criollo* classes (i.e., American-born of European origin), and racial impersonation informed virtually all cultural expression: the artist Víctor Patricio Landaluze created widely circulated illustrations of black Cubans. José Crespo y Borbón wrote as an African-born slave describing his visits to the theatre in the invented (and pejorative) African *bozal* dialect. Crespo's influential 1847 play, *A Cuban Stew; or, The Wedding of Pancho Jutía and Carruto Raspadura*, appropriated a popular culinary metaphor to bring Cuba's racialized plantation cultural mix to urban theatre audiences and initiated the process whereby popular theatre strategically used blackface to control "the degree to which Africans actually participate[d] in the developing Cuban stew" (43).

Chapter 2, "Anticolonial Blackface, 1868," looks closely at blackface performance's role on the eve of Cuba's first war of independence. Inspired by touring Spanish *ópera bufa* groups, local *teatro bufo* companies specialized in comic revue-style musical theatre. Their wildly successful first season ended abruptly at a performance on 22 January 1869, when armed Spanish soldiers fired into the audience and sent anticolonialist *bufo* performers into exile. In these early *bufo* performances, a new urban blackface stock character replaced the earlier plantation's *bozal*-slave. The *catedrático*—a pretentious, free-black professor without an apparent real-world referent—seemed to spring from white *criollos*' fear of becoming too "African" in the process of separating from Spain.

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The *catedrático's* racist ventriloquism "allowed white audiences unabashedly to project the fear of being African onto the African himself" (79).

Chapter 3, "Black(face) Public Spheres, 1880–1895," argues that the "technology of performance" (and not print culture) dominated Cuba's public expression during the period between the 1868–78 war and the later, successful war of independence. Notwithstanding a proliferation of newspapers and magazines, the public favored dances, baseball games (typically concluding with an evening of social dance), and theatrical performances. In 1879 returning *bufo* groups provided black- and brownface performances, more African-inspired music and dance, and a wealth of new plays. With slavery's abolition, in 1886, a distinctively black social performance also emerged. These mutual-aid-society-sponsored *veladas* were marathons of speeches, poetry, three-act plays, classical music, and social dance.

Blackface Cuba's remaining chapters turn to twin phenomena of this interwar period—the musical *danzón* and the *mulata* character type—thus weaving into their discussion of racial impersonation the gendering of the Cuban social body. Chapter 4, "National Rhythm, Racial Adulteration, and the *Danzón*, 1881–1882," examines the controversy arising from the music-dance craze of the *danzón*, a staple of *teatro bufo* as well as of public entertainments. Accused of "Africanizing" young white women (yet commended by black leaders for "progressively" departing from African drums), Danzón comes to his own defense in Ramón Morales Alvarez's 1882 play, *The Trial of "El Oso,"* and proudly asserts his status as a natural-born child of Dance and an unknown (but probably colonial Spanish) father. Chapter 5, "Racial Ethnography and Literate Sex, 1888," studies another mixed-parentage offspring, the *mulata.* In late nineteenth-century *bufo* performances, the biracial *mulata* supplanted the *bozal* and the *catedrático* to become the "central figure through which emergent notions of social, sexual, racial, and ultimately national purity were negotiated in an emergent Cuban public sphere" (180–1). While early Cuban ethnographers denigrated the *mulata* as the white social body's source of infection, black women created their own forms of public representation, specifically in the biweekly magazine *Minerva*, Cuba's first publication by and for women of color. And the *bufo* stage celebrated the impersonated *mulata:* the beautiful *mulata de rumbo* living to dance her nights away, and the equally beautiful *mulata de rango* enjoying the "protection" of a wealthy white lover. Performed in brownface by white actresses, the onstage *mulata* became "a palatable fantasy of liberal Cuba herself: a white, virgin, patriot, and erotic Cuban *rumbera*, all in one" (207).

Lane's study concludes with two remarkable *bufo* plays: Ignacio Saragacha's *Bufos in Africa* (1882) and Raimundo Cabrera's *From the Park to the Moon* (1888). In the former, Havana's leading *bufo* actors perform themselves, shipwrecked in Africa en route to a gig in Spain, captured (in blackface!), and condemned by the very imagined Africans they've made a career of impersonating. Cabrera's play sends a cross section of desperate Cubans to the moon, a tropical paradise populated by nymphs where the Cubans replay their own colonial history before returning to an equally imaginary Cuba. For Lane, both plays are "cartographic fantasies" that "map and remap the coordinates of

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national belonging in deceptively literal ways, constituting the shape and direction of national desire in the process" (226). As each play "spatializes" the Othering so essential to nineteenth-century *bufo* performance, it imagines other colonial histories and rehearses Cuban nation building.

Blackface Cuba is a fascinating analysis of what is now a textual archive. My quibbles are few: although I appreciate Lane's refusal—eloquently argued in her brief Preface—to treat as translation equivalencies the racialized dialects of U.S. blackface minstrelsy and Cuban blackface *bufo* performance, I found myself seeking more nuanced translations of the quoted plays, still largely unavailable to the Anglophone reader. The *bufo* wordplay and puns—as well as the performances' ferocious humor—disappear in the author's "literal" translations. Some typographical inconsistencies in the reproduction of Spanish names (e.g., Morales Alvarez's name is incorrectly spelled on pages 151, 172, and 177) may confuse unfamiliar readers. Lane has carefully centered her project on the "specificity of the Cuban criollo experience" (x); I second her hope that future projects will expand upon her important groundwork to explore the intersections of Creole colonial experiences in the Caribbean.

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Theatres of Independence: Drama, Theory and Urban Performance in India since 1947. By Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker. Studies in Theatre History and Culture. Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 2005; pp. 540, 20 illus., 2 maps. $49.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Cobina Gillitt, New York University

Aparna Dharwadker's *Theatres of Independence: Drama, Theory and Urban Performance in India since 1947* is as monumental as its subject. Bringing together an "unconventional fusion of drama and theatre history, performance contexts, theoretical analysis, and literary interpretation" (3), Dharwadker not only produces a comprehensive history of multicultural, multilingual, and divergent postcolonial urban Indian theatres, but also provides an impressive model and framework for an epistemology of postcolonial identity construction and *practice* in South Asia. Her direct engagement with both literary drama and theatrical performance enriches this study and makes it a valuable contribution to a wide array of fields from performance and theatre studies to postcolonial studies of drama and literature.

Chapter 1 launches directly into an exhaustive positioning of her project, both historically and theoretically, in relation to the existing scholarship. Dharwadker boldly takes previous studies to task for their "ideological erasure" (6) and their effective marginalization of modern Indian theatrical practice for their failure to engage in the intricacies inherent in postcolonial nation building. She details the complexity of Indian theatre history as well as the multiple voices that have contributed to the construction of an Indian theatre history and their

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failure to do so with the proper critical emphases. Her "highly self-conscious, self-reflexive" (13) approach to her work is a performative act in itself and serves as the model with which she frames her subject as a whole. Her approach is meticulously analytical. She notes (almost to the point of apology) her inability to categorize neatly both her study and the works she analyzes, as if she were anticipating the same kind of rigorous analysis of her work that she has applied to that of others.

The remainder of the book is divided into three parts, each adding another textual layer to the work as a whole. Part I, "The Field of Indian Theatre after Independence," consists of four chapters that trace the development of theatre's place within a postcolonial imperative to form a national identity distinct from colonial and even precolonial India. The challenge for Dharwadker is to discover "those modes of Indianness and nation-ality that are both descriptive and constructive rather than prescriptive and coercive" (24). She argues that the Indian situation is unique given the multilingual and multicultural traditions that give rise to the literatures and theatres that do not necessarily represent a *national* (homogenous) tradition but that—taken together—reflect the nation in their plurality. Despite the linguistic and regional differences between playwrights writing in the Bengali, Marathi, Hindi, Kannada, Gujarati, Tamil, and Malayalam languages, translation makes their work available to each other and to national and, ultimately, to international audiences. Dharwadker's comprehensive analysis reveals the complexity of the multilingual, interregional, and international theatrical canon of postcolonial India. She examines the specific relationships between significant contributing playwrights, directors, actors, and their audiences, as well as the interplay between traditional Indian cultures, orientalist scholarship, and the production and reception of urban Indian theatre in the postindependence period.

In Part II, "Genres in Context: Theory, Play and Performance," Dharwadker identifies the predominant dramatic genres in Indian theatre since independence, tracing them from their sources to production. She shows how the use of myths (such as the *Mahābhārata* epic) and historical stories have been used to address contemporary political, social, and philosophical questions. Such use, she argues, has shifted theatrical practice from a tradition of recitation to actor-oriented performance through regional forms of language, music, dance, and gesture in concert with postmodern aesthetics. In the process of making that argument, Dharwadker emphasizes the complexity of the intertextual layering of India's unique position as a multilingual and multicultural nation. Dharwadker follows that discussion with illustrations of two other contrasting trends in postcolonial Indian theatre: realistic and naturalistic depictions of contemporary urban life, and an antirealist neotraditionalist movement that incorporates music and dance into a contemporary "urban folk theatre" written and produced by urban-based theatre artists. In the final chapter, Dharwadker opens up the discussion on intertextuality and translation to include the profound effect that Bertolt Brecht's theories have had on postcolonial Indian theatre. Brecht is easily co-opted and indigenized in Indonesia and China, since Brecht himself located his epic theatre style in the so-called old Asiatic theatres. This is an apt example

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with which to underscore the underlying theme of the book: that "the constitutive features of post-independence drama do not allow any clear line of separation between the native and the foreign, the national and transnational" (387). Nor, for that matter, does Dharwadker allow any clear lines of separation between "theory, text, performance and reception" (16) in this painstakingly conceived and detailed work.

The book ends with an impressive set of ten appendixes documenting the major plays, playwrights, directors, and productions from 1950 to 2004 that are discussed or alluded to in the main text. Much of this information has never before been published in a single source. In keeping with her emphasis on the importance of multilingual and multiregional theatre in India, Dharwadker indicates the original language of the play, its original title, translations, and performance history.

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Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China. By Li Ruru. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003; pp. 305. $45 cloth, $24.95 paper.

Reviewed by Sudipto Chatterjee, University of California, Berkeley

Intercultural performance practice is not an open and shut case, and that is made amply clear by Li Ruru's exhaustive treatment of Chinese Shakespeare, *Shashibiya: Staging Shakespeare in China.* The most emphatic point Li Ruru makes in her book is that there can be no one-size-fits-all "theory" of intercultural performance that applies to all geocultural spaces. She does that by offering detailed accounts of how Shakespeare's works have been transmitted to theatre audiences in twentieth-century Mainland China (beginning with the Chinese pronunciation of Shakespeare's name, which serves as her title). The reception has been divided and variegated, depending on when and where the productions were staged and contemporary political trends over the stretch of a century. Li utilizes the Geertzian "thick description" strategy, where her effort is not to offer her readers "a linear narrative of the history of Shakespeare performance in China, but to examine how essential meanings may metamorphose when the Western canon is brought onto the Chinese stage" (9).

In early twentieth-century China, Li notes a vacillation between absorbing Shakespeare into popular traditions and deriving literary authority from his authoritative figure. Her first chapter, "Shakespeare in China: Between His First 'Arrival' and the Cultural Revolution," discusses literary adaptations and productions from the start of the twentieth century. Li describes both realistic productions under the influence of Western models as well as "sinified" productions that adapted the traditional *xiqu* formats of musical/operatic theatre. Shakespeare continued to be produced in the early years of communist rule, serving as an example of the artist as social critic who exposed the feudal social

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structure of his time. However, during the Cultural Revolution, Shakespeare (like most theatre) was rejected as an exemplar of "capitalist art."

In the subsequent chapters of her book, Li gives us sumptuous discussions of numerous Shakespeare productions, both in the *huaju* (spoken) as well as *xiqu* (operatic) styles, offering fascinating accounts of the intercultural explorations made by Chinese directors. In Chapter 2, "Orthodox Presentations in Chinese Eyes," Li analyzes two productions—*Much Ado about Nothing* (1957), directed by the Soviet director Yevgeniya Konstantinovna Lipkovskaya, and its revivals in 1961 and 1979; and *Macbeth* in 1980, directed by Xu Xiaozhong and Li Zibo—that illustrate the entry of Soviet art through the Stanislavsky "system" into the spoken theatre of Communist China. At the same time, through personal anecdotes, Li illustrates the relativity of the transference of culture-specific aesthetics and how, more often than not, they morph into something else, rendering their labels far less meaningful: what Li thought was very much in line with Soviet-style realism in the 1980 Chinese *Macbeth* came across as overacted to her Australian cohort two decades later!

Chapter 3, "Rebels against the Classics," covers the years immediately after the Cultural Revolution to 1989, when a powerful student movement shook the seat of communist supremacy, precipitating a period of economic liberalization in China. That period in Chinese history, Li laments, saw the gradual dismantling of state-supported theatre and the rise of television. While that meant that theatre was once again "poor," it also guaranteed more freedom of expression. The Shakespeare productions from that period, as exemplified in Li's discussion of *Hamlet* (1989, 1990, and 1994) and *Othello* (1994), were much more experimental, textually and formally, even while working within the idiom of the *huaju* style.

In Chapter 4, "The Chinese Faces of Shakespeare," Li moves to three Shakespeare productions in the *xiqu* style (*Macbeth*, 1986; *Much Ado about Nothing*, 1986; and *Hamlet*, 1994) that adapted elements of traditional performance to the Shakespearean texts. These productions sought "to quarry Shakespeare as source material to create their own stories . . . using indigenous theatrical conventions" (160). In Chapter 5, "Keeping Shakespeare in the 'Original Sauce,'" Li looks at two productions (*Twelfth Night*, 1986; *Othello*, 1983, 1986, and 1987) that attempted to create a nether space between the "original play" and the "target culture," using traditional Chinese operatic forms like *yueju* and *jingju*, respectively. Those productions attempted to preserve the integrity of the Shakespearean text as much as possible (actors approaching the lines with the attentiveness of the *huaju* idiom), but also sought to tap the expressive potential of the conventions of traditional performance. Both intercultural experiments were controversial and only partially successful.

In her final chapter, "Another Dimension in Intercultural Shakespeare," Li examines two palpably intercultural Shakespeare productions of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, both from 1994. While the former was a Sino–British collaboration, "blending . . . *jingju* and contemporary studio theatre," (196) the latter was a parody of the Danish play as *Shamlet* and was produced jointly by two

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companies, one from the Mainland and the other from Taiwan. Li asserts that the Sino–British collaboration was a successful attempt at reconciling two very different approaches not only to Shakespeare but to theatre as such, but she regrets the failure of *Shamlet* on account of its strained efforts to go beyond both a Western-style staging and Chinese traditional theatre by making reference to "contemporary local culture." In her Conclusion,"Old Man Sha: Dead or Sleeping?" Li encapsulates the state of Shakespeare stagings in China, saying, "Shakespeare, then, is not dead. But he is in a fitful slumber" (230) in a country swimming in the high tides of radical sociopolitical change.

Li Ruru's amply illustrated book is a well-designed gold mine of information and primary documentation with numerous charts and appendixes and will interest both scholarly and general audiences. Balancing history with thought-provoking thick description, it will give any reader, in the classroom or the living room, an eminently readable account of Shakespeare's fate in China in the past century. However, in doing so, Li also engages many of the vexed issues percolating through and circulating around intercultural performance practice in a globalized world, where cultural boundaries cannot hold, where nondefinitive hybridities will push toward definition but never sediment quietly at the bottom of the turgid ocean of an increasingly "glocal" culture.

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Staging the UK. By Jen Harvie. Manchester, UK, and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005; pp. ix + 246, 27 illus. $74.95 cloth, $24.95 paper.

Reviewed by Joanne Zerdy, University of Minnesota

Jen Harvie's *Staging the UK* is a provocative analysis of how theatre and film practitioners represent themselves in relation to British culture and politics. While texts such as Aleks Sierz's *In-Yer-Face Theatre* (London: Faber & Faber, 2001) have focused on the literary qualities of contemporary British drama, Harvie departs from the purview of drama and turns a keen eye to the dynamic, ephemeral, and often site-specific performances taking place across the British Isles. Arriving nearly a decade after Randall Stevenson's *Scottish Theatre since the Seventies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996) and Anna-Marie Taylor's *Staging Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), which are both useful compilations that ostensibly speak to more localized concerns, Harvie's book more broadly investigates individual performances within the United Kingdom alongside the assemblage of artistic practices that constitute the Edinburgh festivals.

Expanding upon Benedict Anderson's theory of the nation as "imagined community," Harvie investigates the dynamic ways that the nation and its theatrical practices dialogically engage with one another, reflecting changing policies and notions of citizenship. Her theoretical framework—a combination of materialism, historicism, performance studies, and postcolonialist

perspectives—encourages us to read these events and policies dialectically in order to trouble assumptions of a single local or national identity. Among the many important questions addressed, this text asks what kinds of community these national identities form, what tensions exist between conflicting cultural formulations, and how those tensions are negotiated on stage (2).

Harvie argues for a critique both of theatrical performances and of the institutional structures that support or restrict them. Her chapter on policy reads New Labour politics into the British Council's artistic campaign and its use of the term "creative industries" to brand, and potentially to commodify, the performing and visual arts (23). While acknowledging the financial support that the British Council has afforded numerous practitioners to produce their work in the United Kingdom and abroad, Harvie observes that, through its aim "to export British culture and English language, the British Council has always risked being accused of cultural imperialism" (30). This section concludes with a brief look at the new National Theatre of Scotland, considered a potential model for maintaining diverse perspectives by supporting extant companies and thus challenging the perceived hegemony of the National Theatre in London. Harvie imagines that it "will facilitate the articulation of different groups' identities, experiences, theatre practices, and, even different groups' Scotlands" (33).

Moving from broad institutional policies that influence much of the theatre in the United Kingdom, Harvie distills her argument in order to read site-specific performances that "enact a spatial history, mediating between the past and the present" (44). Her critique examines the Welsh company Brif Gof's production of *Gododdin* (1988), which originally took place in a disused Cardiff car factory. Harvie observes that the particular identity negotiated through that performance changed as the production left Wales and toured through Germany, a journey that challenged and layered the production's notion of Welshness. Juxtaposing the *Gododdin* production with an account of Tinderbox's *convictions* (2001) that occurred at the Crumlin Road Courthouse in Belfast, Harvie notes *convictions*' "disruptive and dialogic" nature. Here she contends that the production challenged the audience's "conventional relationship to the . . . [c]ourthouse and its history, decisively undermining a hegemonic remembering of the building as evidence of Northern Ireland's irreducible and sole basis in sectarianism" (58). By analyzing the material conditions of these productions and performance spaces, together with the social and political issues that influence them, Harvie effectively argues that those performances—and ultimately Wales and Northern Ireland—resist being viewed as "postcolonial, derivative and peripheral" within the United Kingdom (46). The chapter makes a provocative, implicit bridge to a later section examining genealogies of performance, which posits that Europe has infused the largely literary style of British drama with greater physical and political risk taking.

That type of risk taking is evident in the ever-growing Edinburgh festivals. Harvie argues that the festivals, and Edinburgh itself, have become somewhat "McDonaldized" and "Disneyfied" through processes of globalization and particularly through the influx of American interest and influence. Yet, she contends, they resist total commodification by remaining an elite experience

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centered around European modernist theatre (in the case of the Edinburgh International Festival) or by offering a vast diversity of performance genres and venues that resist absolute homogeny (as is the case with the Fringe).

Harvie's final chapters, "Bollywood in Britain" and "Re-imagining the Imperial Metropolis," build on that notion of the global marketplace and return us to her earlier challenge to resist a single understanding of British identity. The first of these chapters offers a postcolonial reading of the influx of Bollywood cinema and stage performances in the United Kingdom. Her investigation singles out Tamasha's *Fourteen Songs* (1998)*, Two Weddings and a Funeral* (2001), and Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Bombay Dreams* (2002). Here Harvie asks whether the performances embody Homi Bhabha's notion of resistant "mimicry" or are merely "orientalised," in the sense put forth by Edward Said. The final chapter examines London as a site of both an enduring imperial power (made visible through its cultural institutions and monuments) and subversive ephemerality (exemplified through Steve McQueen's vibrant and defiant film installation, *Caribs' Leap/Western Deep*, 2002). In its resistance to providing a single interpretation of the significance of these performances in relation to the capital, the book leaves space for our own imaginings of London's dramatic stages.

Harvie examines performances in the United Kingdom through a nationalist lens, while attending to the complicated influences of neoliberal politics. In the process, she reimagines the relationships forged between performances and communities in an increasingly globalized environment. Considering its dialogic approach to these performances, however, perhaps the book could have presented a more explicit dialogue between the various practices that it investigates. How, for example, might the *convictions* performance speak to *Caribs' Leap/Western Deep*? In what ways do the multiple performance sites of the Edinburgh festivals enable us to rethink the relationship between theatrical events taking place in the United Kingdom's capital cities? Nevertheless, the text is a thoroughly engaging read for theatre scholars, practitioners, and students as well as for anyone interested in British cultural studies or politics.

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Spiked: Church–State Intrigue and "The Rose Tattoo." By Gerard Whelan with Carolyn Swift. Dublin: New Island, 2002; pp. 385 + 14 illus. $21.95 paper.

Reviewed by Karin Maresh, Washington & Jefferson College

In *Spiked*, Gerard Whelan, with the aid of Carolyn Swift, charts the bizarre and confounding events surrounding the Republic of Ireland's prosecution of the cofounder of the Pike Theatre, Alan Simpson, and his production of Tennessee Williams's *The Rose Tattoo.* The basic elements of the story are relatively simple. In May 1957, the small Pike Theatre became the toast of Dublin's first ever International Theatre Festival with its production of the Williams play. Then, on the tenth night of the run, "the sky fell" (62). Plain-clothed detectives arrived

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at the theatre demanding that offensive passages be cut from the text or the entire production be shut down. Simpson's refusal to do either of those things resulted in his arrest the following evening. What followed was more than a year of legal wrangling involving the District, High, and Supreme Courts of Ireland, and eventually Simpson's full exoneration. Rumors abounded as to the reasons for Simpson's arrest and for the Irish state's intense prosecution of what it deemed the Pike's production of an indecent play. Swift, Simpson's wife and cofounder of the Pike, spent the next forty-five years looking for the truth.

In January 2000, the Irish state made some of the papers from the case publicly available. That prompted Swift and Whelan to begin a search for information to explain who initiated the case and why the Pike had been singled out. The purpose of *Spiked* is ultimately to provide an answer as to "why the *Rose Tattoo* case happened and why the State was so vicious in its consistently inexplicable prosecution of Alan Simpson" (11). How, for example, did the Pike's production come to the attention of the Department of Justice, and why did the state use a summary warrant, a type of warrant reserved for armed criminals and terrorists, to arrest Simpson? Another of the book's goals is to dispel myths about the case, in particular the rumors that "Simpson and/or the cast were put on trial, after complaints from the public, because a condom was produced on the stage of the Pike" (339). Throughout *Spiked*, Whelan corrects what he and Swift believe to be mistruths. For example, he asserts that no official record of any public complaint about the Pike production exists, and he reiterates Swift's oft-told, though seldom remembered, claim that no condom had been dropped on the Pike's stage.

Organized into four parts and thirty-six short chapters, *Spiked* provides the most detailed account of the proceedings involved in the *Rose Tattoo* case to date. Part 1 documents the events of that case, and as a result reads very much like a detective story. Contemporary records provide some of the information for that section, but much of the story is told using the separate published accounts of the case by Simpson and Swift. The cumulative effect is at first frustrating but suspenseful and enlightening as the reader relives in great detail the events of May 1957 through June 1958. The reader may experience some of the utter helplessness and confusion the pair must have felt at the time as they strove to comprehend the bizarre situation in which they found themselves embroiled. Although Whelan makes a few references to the behind-the-scenes developments between the state and the Catholic hierarchy, he seeks to maintain the same ignorance for the reader that Simpson and Swift faced at the time.

Part 2 provides analysis of the documents Whelan and Swift encountered in the State's *Tattoo* file at the National Archives of Ireland. Although the file is slim and created more questions for the authors than answers, a seven-point Justice Department memo it contained (which suggests the course of action the state should take against the Pike) proved to be significant and led the authors to the archival papers of Archbishop McQuaid, head of the Irish Catholic Church in 1957 and a man with a penchant for intrigue. Part 3 focuses on the investigation of those papers, and the consequential discovery of an entirely different censorship matter related to a battle over the membership of the Irish Censorship

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Board. There is a necessary tediousness to that section as Whelan constructs "jigsaw-like" (191) what he and Swift theorize is the true story of the *Rose Tattoo* affair, that of a secret government conspiracy to rid the Irish Censorship Board of the "unacknowledged Catholic franchise" (218) then in charge of it. According to the evidence presented here, it would seem that the state perceived Simpson and the Pike to be "acceptable casualties . . . incurred in the course of a bigger struggle" (21), one that had nothing to do with either of them. The final part of *Spiked* provides a summary of the events of the *Rose Tattoo* case, incorporating the new theories about the State's motive for prosecuting Simpson. In the end, the available evidence does not afford Whelan the definitive answers he set out to find. However, he successfully creates reasonable doubt that the *Rose Tattoo* case had anything to do with an indecent production.

Whelan occasionally quotes statements he and Swift made while researching the book, and, at times, *Spiked* ends up resembling a novel. There are also a few instances when Whelan seems to have the informed Irish reader in mind when referencing certain political issues, such as the Mother and Child scheme (a controversial 1950 proposal calling for free medical care for children and pregnant women), and does not always provide explanation for them. However, his thorough research and analysis, along with his detailed notes, give this work the mark of a serious scholarly effort. *Spiked* is a fascinating foray into the political mechanisms of 1950s Ireland, as well as the research process itself, and the theories Whelan and Swift put forth provide plausible answers to a decades-old mystery that led to the demise of the promising Pike Theatre, as well as Simpson's and Swift's marriage. Perhaps just as important, it provided answers and long overdue satisfaction for Carolyn Swift, who died within the month following the publication of *Spiked.*

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The Art of the American Musical: Conversations with the Creators. Edited by Jackson R. Bryer and Richard A. Davison. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005; pp. xvi + 308. $23.95 paper.

Reviewed by Greg White, Texas Tech University

In the introduction to *The Art of the American Musical: Conversations with the Creators*, Jackson R. Bryer and Richard A. Davison state that Oscar Hammerstein II's description of theatre as a "nightly miracle" motivated them to compile their book (iv). The miracle that Bryer and Davison effectively explore here is the highly collaborative art of the musical theatre. This collection of fifteen detailed interviews with eighteen creators of the musical theatre includes prominent composers, lyricists, directors, choreographers, performers, playwrights, and producers. The impressive list of interviewees comprises Lynn Ahrens, Stephen Flaherty, Jason Robert Brown, Betty Comden, Adolph Green, Sheldon Harnick, John Kander, Fred Ebb, Burton Lane, Arthur Laurents,

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Kathleen Marshall, Harold Prince, Stephen Sondheim, Susan Stroman, Charles Strouse, Tommy Tune, John Weidman, and George C. Wolfe. These interviews provide a glance back at musical theatre's past, a view of its immediate present, and some glimpses at the potential future, and serve as a veritable guide on how to collaborate on the exhilaratingly daunting task of creating a musical.

Almost without exception each artist refers to a teacher or mentor who helped shape his or her career. The chain extends from contemporary Broadway composer Jason Robert Brown sharing his experiences working with the inspired Hal Prince, to Hal Prince himself relating the counsel he gleaned from collaborating with legendary musical-theatre director George Abbott. Stephen Sondheim speaks candidly about his generous guide, Oscar Hammerstein II, and Arthur Laurents shares a forthright account of collaborating with choreographer Jerome Robbins. Each artist opens a different window on Broadway's past, offering revealing, touching, often humorous accounts of the legends that inspired, motivated, or even offended them. Historians and students of the craft will benefit from this wealth of information, while enthusiasts will savor the distinctive tales of Lane discovering Judy Garland, Laurents enabling the emergence of Barbra Streisand, and Prince rejecting Liza Minnelli for Broadway's original *Cabaret.* The book refers to many musical-theatre legends who are no longer with us (Rodgers and Hammerstein, Leonard Bernstein, Alan Jay Lerner, Frank Loesser, Jule Styne, Jerome Robbins, Michael Bennett, Bob Fosse, Zero Mostel, Ethel Merman, and Gower Champion) but who are present in spirit through the interviews.

All of the artists interviewed were involved in productions at the time of the interviews. The book examines multiple recent musical-theatre offerings including Ahrens's and Flaherty's *Dessa Rose*, Brown's *Parade*, Sondheim's *Bounce*, and Stroman's collaboration with Mel Brooks on *The Producers*, to name a few. Each artist gives a thorough, honest account of his or her recent experiences, admitting both successes and failures in the difficult contemporary market. Each expresses mutual frustration with the craft, desiring to push boundaries while still remaining commercially viable. All see an uncertain future for the musical, yet remain optimistic. In addition to enormous talent, all of the interviewees share a passion and love for the art of the musical theatre.

The book addresses the collaborative nature of the craft, illustrating collaborations that lasted (Kander and Ebb, Comden and Green), those that did not (Bock and Harnick), and those that are emerging and strengthening (Ahrens and Flaherty). Addressing collaboration and his "control freak" nature, Hal Prince explains: "Collaboration is regenerative; when I hit a stone wall the answer is out there, and not necessarily with me" (180). While Comden and Green relish their marriagelike collaboration, they also celebrate their work with other creative artists, often assuming different, varied responsibilities. The introduction makes a strong point claiming that musical theatre is thoroughly dependent on cooperation and collaboration.

The Art of the American Musical: Conversations with the Creators proves similar in format to Lawrence Thelen's *The Show Makers: Great Directors of the American Musical Theater* (New York: Routledge, 2000). Missing from Bryer

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and Davison's work is the unity that Thelen's text provided. Thelen used a certain set of questions for each interviewed artist, giving the reader a focused opportunity to compare and contrast the individuals. Bryer and Davison use multiple interviewers, which eliminates a consistent voice. They also employ a variety of questions, which can prove titillating but often give the text an inconsistent feel. However, Thelen's text solely addressed directors, whereas this publication explores a wider range of practitioners. Bryer and Davison promise a follow-up to their book that will focus solely on performers.

The Art of the American Musical: Conversations with the Creators could serve as the perfect companion for a musical-theatre history course, while critics, performers, composers, directors, lyricists, playwrights, and enthusiasts will find kernels of wisdom in abundance. Valuable advice from masters on directing, performing, and writing the musical flows throughout the text. One of the more poignant aspects of this book is that several of the interviewees, including Ebb, Green, and Lane, have since passed away, increasing the historical value of the interviews; the book preserves authoritative voices of the only "indigenously American theatrical form," as it is described by Bryer and Davison (viii). In one of the text's many insightful moments, Tommy Tune speaks with devotion about the magic of the musical:

> Everybody who goes to the theatre wants to believe. Yes, they're sitting there with people next to them, and there's a band in the pit, the walls fly in and out, and it's all totally ridiculous. Yet we all love that world that's getting ready to come at us, that little bit of make-believe. If you establish it and keep it, and don't break their hearts or minds, then you've got something—but it's a real hard thing to find. (253)

Bryer and Davison have "got something" with their exciting contribution to the study of musical theatre.

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No Applause—Just Throw Money: The Book That Made Vaudeville Famous. By Trav S. D. New York: Farber & Farber, 2005; pp. 328. $25 cloth.

Reviewed by Thomas S. Hischak, State University of New York College at Cortland

Most books about vaudeville fall into one of two categories. Highly prevalent in the past were those written by vaudevillians themselves or those who experienced vaudeville (often as impressionable youths), usually recalling the long-gone genre with rose-colored nostalgia and anecdotal chattiness. The more recent approach, written by later generations who intellectualize the popular art form, revel in vaudeville's sociopolitical implications but rarely capture the vivacity of variety entertainment. Trav S. D.'s *No Applause—Just Throw Money* avoids the pitfalls of either approach and presents a balanced, well-researched,

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affectionate, and even irreverent look at that unique American phenomenon. Trav S. D. (the stage name of Travis Stewart) is a practicing vaudevillian, or as much as one can be today. He manages, emcees, and performs with the American Vaudeville Theatre in New York City and, as the tongue-in-cheek title hints, his is far from a dry and academic approach. However, one does not need to get very far in the book to realize that this is a thorough, detailed, and analytical work and one that brings to life the facts as well as the zest of vaudeville.

This spirited history goes back to Dionysian rites in ancient Greece to explore the roots of variety entertainment, then follows its development through the Roman mass-audience amusements, the Middle Ages and its troubadours, the Italian commedia dell'arte troupes, the Elizabethan clowns, the English music hall, the French revue, mountebanks, and the ethnic theatricals fashioned for the hoards of immigrants to America in the nineteenth century. Trav S. D. makes clear distinctions between vaudeville and its many cousins, such as circuses, burlesque, medicine shows, minstrel companies, and revues. He plots the development from crude saloonlike variety to the Big Time vaudeville that reached its heyday in the early decades of the preceding century. Then, just as carefully, he charts the decline of the genre, not settling for simple answers and sweeping generalizations. It is a bumpy ride with lots of twists and turns, but the author makes it all as thought-provoking as it is thrilling. Like any two-a-day performer, Trav S. D. cannot resist cracking jokes throughout his narrative, but it must be said that most of his quips land nicely. Even his chapter titles amuse, such as "Who Put the 'Devil' in Vaudeville?," tracing the anti-Puritan roots of the genre, and "The Phoenix in Foolscap," a chapter that looks at the misnamed New Vaudeville and its proponents such as the Flying Karamazov Brothers, Bill Irwin, and Penn & Teller.

Going against the widespread theories of the old performers and their numerous memoirs and tell-all autobiographies, Trav insists that the most important ingredient in the strength of vaudeville was the managers, not the performers. There had always been many willing to perform for anyone under the most inhospitable of circumstances. It was the shrewd, business-minded nonartists like E. F. Albee, B. F. Keith, and others who created Big Time vaudeville and made it into a national institution. Trav S. D. does not soft-pedal the notoriously cruel reputations of many such men, but he illustrates that the thousands of diehard performers whom vaudeville employed were basically nonconformists and misfits unable to organize themselves. Whereas theatre and radio artists, for example, were able to forge strong labor unions, the vaudevillians' attempts were fruitless and embarrassing. No wonder it took ruthless showmen to whip such a group into a marketable giant.

Another area where Trav S. D. departs from the traditional is his discussion of the stars of vaudeville. The usual cast of characters is here, from Lillian Russell to Sophie Tucker to Al Jolson, as well as dozens of then-popular vaudeville names who are not so well remembered today because they did not find second fame on the radio, in the movies, or on television. It is not the inclusion of such people that makes *No Applause* unique; it is the way the author looks at them and irreverently assesses their talents. For example, he identifies Eva Tanguay as

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"a bad singer and graceless dancer, with hair like a rat's nest" and describes her as "homely" and "overweight," yet manages to pinpoint her extreme popularity as "a triumph of personality, originality, and sensationalism—not only over discipline and craft but even over beauty and talent" (132). She was billed as an "eccentric comedienne," and Trav S. D. helps modern audiences understand Tanguay's appeal by describing her as an earlier version of Janis Joplin or Tina Turner. Often as fascinating as the stars are the many nobodies that populated small-time vaudeville. The book recounts numerous oddities that one might associate more with freak shows and circuses, as well as higher-class acts ranging from magicians to mind readers. Trav S. D. spends a great deal of time discussing the melting pot aspect of vaudeville, from its many ethnic branches to its ability to break down class barriers because variety thrived on pleasing audiences rather than delineating them.

While most commentators bemoan the death of vaudeville, Trav S. D. takes a more long-range approach. He explores the ways in which the old genre affected silent (and, next, talking) films, radio, television, rock and roll, Las Vegas, Renaissance fairs, MTV, Off-Broadway curiosities, and Broadway revues. He also argues that the rediscovery of vaudeville talents, such as Mae West, W. C. Fields, and the Marx Brothers by new generations in the 1960s and 1970s speak more of the long-term appeal of variety entertainment than most acknowledge. Without getting nostalgic, Trav S. D. sees the big picture. What made vaudeville so popular was not the times or the given circumstances. It was something more basic, more innate. He believes that vaudeville is "the life spirit itself, it is our very humanity. And this is why vaudeville can never be 'dead.' For the day vaudeville flatlines is the day you can also write the epitaph for the human race" (295).

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