

work' is a sound one. In part as a reaction to this, she turns to the wealth of plays written by women which produced representations of women who at least make a good attempt to 'beat the system', thereby exploring the potential of women's social and political agency within a world which might be transformed.

In 'Rewriting the Past', Eltis turns to less examined writers such as Haddon Chambers, H. M. Harwood, and Eden Phillpotts to open out the analyses. She then brings the volume to a close, looking for example at the ways in which Noël Coward's works such as *Fallen Angels* provided a means of 'destabilizing sexual judgements'. While more analyzes of the *body* – an exploration of 'women and sex on stage' focused on performance as well as text – would have been welcome, this is an excellent work of scholarship, which does more than enough to warrant a place as an original and vital study in an expanding field.

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Karen Jürs-Munby, Jerome Carroll and Steve Giles, ed.

**Postdramatic Theatre and the Political:
International Perspectives on Contemporary
Performance**

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In his seminal *Postdramatic Theatre* Hans-Thies Lehmann gave scholars a rich analytical vocabulary for apprehending and clarifying contemporary performance trends. Nevertheless, the elevation of aesthetic form over thematic content unleashed a degree of ambiguity concerning the postdramatic's political potential that this valuable volume tackles head on. In one of two distinguished contributions from graduate students bookending the collection, Brandon Woolf explicates much of the theoretical terrain (Jaques Rancière's politics of aesthetics is oft cited) undergirding this book. Michael Wood's concluding chapter puts theory into practice through a close analysis of a nine-line poem by Heiner Müller, building a persuasive case for its feasibility (and its politics) as a postdramatic text.

Throughout, one of this collection's main achievements is its illumination of theoretical abstraction through concrete case studies – Shannon Jackson's exploration of postdramatic labour in The Builder's Association's *Alladeen* is full of insight, and a welcome contrast to the plethora of German-language work drawn on elsewhere. Nevertheless, Karen Jürs-Munby's exploration of Elfriede Jelinek's 'secondary dramas' and their 'parasitic intrusion' into classical works, with Jerome Carroll's phenomenological reading of Ewald Palmethofer's plays, helpfully reveals the extent of the contribution made by *writers* to postdramatic form.

Fascinatingly, many contributors map a political route through postdramatic territory by noticing the persistence of elements ostensibly disposed of in Lehmann's theory. Peter M. Boenisch accounts for what he describes as a 'post-postdramatic' return of history and subjectivity in experimental dance as a response to the 'dilemma of subjective agency after its critical deconstruction'. David Barnett revives the category of the post-Brechtian with reference to Einar Schlee's *Mr Puntilla and His Man Matti*, penetrating the production's 'post-dramatic veneer' to perceive a referentiality to historical reality that desires to 'address concrete social problems'.

Lehmann's own chapter discerns in the historical affiliation of 'tragic experience' and 'ritual' a model for a politically forceful contemporary revival of tragedy as *interruption*, resurfacing in 'the curious twilight zone between political activism and aesthetic practice' opened by postdramatic techniques. Antje Dietze's compelling account of Christoph Schlingensief's *Rocky Dutschke '68* re-assesses activism in the theatre, complementing Mateusz Borowski's and Malgorzata Suigera's meditation on postdramatic theatricalizations of historical events.

Finally, Theron Schmidt's analysis of *Back to Back Theatre's* use of disabled performers, alongside Ulrike Garde's and Meg Mumford's explorations of *Reality Theatre* (by Rimini Protokoll and version 1.0), undermines the binary of the real/representational and, as many of these readings insist, locates political force in paradox and undecidability.

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