

FROM THE EDITOR

“The surprises history has/For us” says the Usonian poet John Ashbery, “are nothing compared to the shock we get/From each other.”¹ The articles and interventions included in this issue of *Theatre Survey* support and expand Ashbery’s insight. In “The Birth of Shakespeare’s Birthplace,” Richard Schoch explores the intricate overlappings of locations, peoples, and national self-fashionings that slowly transformed the house where the Bard entered the world into an object of veneration. Schoch manages to convey the ideological genealogy of Shakespeare’s Birthplace with a wise balancing of ironic wit, enlightening documentation, and narrative acumen. In “When Uncle Tom Didn’t Die: The Anti-Slavery Politics of H. J. Conway’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,” Adena Spingarn shows how the reception of a play based on the famous novel hinged on a complex entanglement of public opinion, commercial imperatives, and dramatic adjustments. Contrary to the novel, Uncle Tom survives in Conway’s version, and this provides Spingarn with an opportunity to consider how unexpected happy endings can actually be more subversive than we tend to believe.

The ghost of Shakespeare returns in Gregory Mackie’s “‘The Modern Idea under an Antique Form’: Aestheticism and Theatrical Archaeology in Oscar Wilde’s *Duchess of Padua*.” In this now almost forgotten blank-verse tragedy, Wilde tried to mobilize an antiquarian impulse that replayed the intonations of Elizabethan language and converted precious objects into veritable characters, thus creating a staged museum in which the set was as relevant as any of the actors involved. Mackie maps Wilde’s Renaissance fantasy with a keen eye for the intersections of genre, personality, and the economic travails of theatre production. Objects are also envisioned as agents in Marlis Schweitzer’s “Networking the Waves: Ocean Liners, Impresarios, and Broadway’s Atlantic Expansion.” Using Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory as a conceptual springboard, Schweitzer daringly analyzes how the increased efficiency of transatlantic travel in the years before the sinking of the *Titanic* impacted the development of old and new performative sites for many floating passengers.

All four articles present us with an invitation to ponder the interlacings of affect and theatricality. Schoch’s article shows how a house in Stratford-upon-Avon was gradually reencoded as a fundamental *scene* in the process of turning Shakespeare into an imperial icon. By visiting the Bard’s Birthplace, guests were able to participate in a dramaturgy of memory and admiration that is still flourishing in today’s global arena. Spingarn reveals how replacing a Christian call for the eternal redemption of Uncle Tom with a more secular request to provide him with a piece of land confused audiences’ reactions to Conway’s play. (Even the reviewers of this adaptation of Stowe’s novel reflected and complicated those perplexities). Mackie illustrates how Wilde’s emphasis on the material conditions of *The Duchess of Padua* demonstrates an aesthetic

approach in which *things* are vested with cathartic power. Wilde wanted to deploy nothing less than a Victorian hallucination, an experiential encounter with the past. And Schweitzer, by describing how machines enabled unprecedented relations between impresarios and performers, disturbs the conventional boundaries between human and nonhuman forces. The poignant closure to Schweitzer's article, in which a man's will is opposed to the will of a torpedo, envisages a post-humanist historiography in which technology and flesh are closely intertwined.

For *Critical Stages*, Patrick Anderson presents another of his dialogical feats. This time we listen with our eyes to a conversation between Ariel Osterweis and Barbara Browning in which they interrogate the work of the dancer-artist known as Narcissister. Fasten your intellectual seatbelts: Narcissister's work is nothing less than a perfect storm in which somatic, theoretical, and affective elements are traded, deconstructed, and deliberately messed with. (If by any chance Narcissister was not already on your radar, I am sure you will recognize the name from now on.) In a move that underlines our journal's commitment to including all walks of life, the contemporary onanistic excursions of Narcissister are followed here by a new installment of *Re: Sources* dedicated to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century dramatic texts. Beth Kattelman invites Eric J. Johnson to describe the Claude E. Anibal Collection of Spanish Drama at The Ohio State University, where a treasure trove of *comedias sueltas* is waiting to be excavated and studied. This supplementary juxtaposition of Narcissister's embodied repertoire and the archival wealth of the Claude E. Anibal Collection is an example of what *Theatre Survey* can do to nurture the diverse array of energies that articulate our professional fields.

Last but not least, Kim Solga is on board to surprise us with a different incarnation of the popular "What Are You . . . ?" series. In this case, Solga gathers a group of experienced editors and publishers who provide generous and incisive advice for all our colleagues and friends. Solga's contribution shows how our journal can combine the pragmatic with the scholarly—a skill we all need and seek in the middle of a professional ecology that is constantly changing.

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This is the last biannual issue of *Theatre Survey*, and we are tracing that line in the sand by offering a preview of some of the ways in which the upcoming tri-annual journal might utilize its expansion to redefine and try out new possibilities. Many members of ASTR have shared with us a desire to increase the visibility of *Theatre Survey* during our yearly conference, and we have been paying attention. As an experiment, we introduce in this issue a section entitled Conference Matters. Our idea is to produce an archive that attests to the proceedings of the ASTR conference while also fostering a deeper involvement with the pragmatic needs of our readers and authors. For the first time we are including a presidential address, one recently presented by Rhonda Blair in Montreal (2011). Also for the first time, *Theatre Survey* is sponsoring a working session at the next November conference in Nashville. The goal of these working sessions will be the development of complete, publishable articles focusing on a particular topic. The theme for our premiere in 2012 is "Translation and Performance." As a prelude to that

discussion, we are including an article by Ana Elena Puga in which she navigates both the pleasures and the resistances faced by our scholars when they add to their research the tasks of translators and dramaturges. Conference Matters is only one potential way of showcasing the interests of all members of ASTR in the context of their journal, and we encourage our readers to let us know what they think and to make their own suggestions for the future.

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This is also my last issue as editor of *Theatre Survey*, and I will miss all my collaborators: Kim Solga, Patrick Anderson, Beth Kattelman, and Rose Elfman, my graduate assistant. My Associate Editor, Esther Kim Lee, has been both an excellent coworker and a trusted friend. Susan Bennett and my colleagues on the Publications Committee of ASTR were a constant source of questions, creativity, and enjoyment. I always looked forward to our meetings each November. A special mention has to be made of Jonathan Geffner at the Cambridge University Press office in New York City. Jonathan's sense of humor and his capacity to solve problems with utmost grace and flexibility were nothing less than amazing. And my copyeditors, Kate Babbitt and Michael Gnat, shared their unlimited knowledge, patience, and support. Working with Kate and Michael has been the equivalent of attending, at the beginning of our new century, the conversations imagined by Baldassare Castiglione in *Il libro del cortegiano* five hundred years ago. But I would like to dedicate my farewell to the authors who submitted articles to *Theatre Survey* during my editorship. I am aware that behind each of their words there were many hours of contemplation, discovery, and hard labors, time wrestled from the flows of everyday life in order to honor the pleasures of the mind. Allow me to offer all of you—every single one of you—my most enthusiastic and heartfelt gratitude.

ENDNOTE

1. John Ashbery, "But What Is the Reader to Make of This?" in *A Wave: Poems* (New York: Viking, 1984), reprinted in *Collected Poems 1956–1987* (New York: Library of America, 2008), 742.