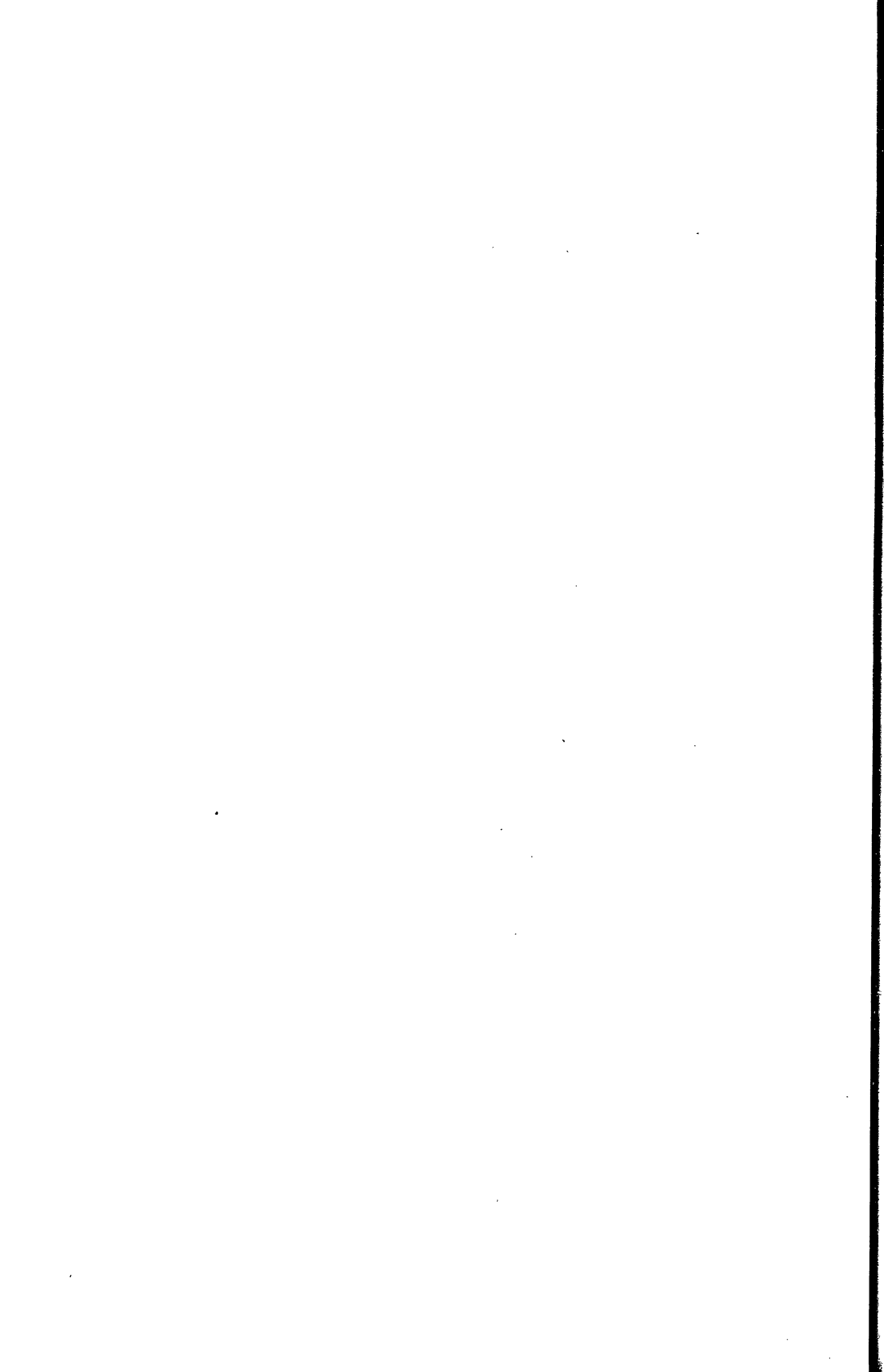


Book Reviews



The Lives and Times of Ebenezer Scrooge by Paul Davis. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Hideous Progenies: Dramatizations of "Frankenstein" from the Nineteenth Century to the Present by Steven Earl Forry. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990.

Both of these texts provide the reader with the opportunity of tracing the adaptational forms and variations deriving from the cultural interest in an original, powerful narrative; they take different approaches, operate on different depths, and achieve differing levels of success, one ultimately proving more successful in this general task than the other. Both texts are useful for students of the process of adaptation, and the affects of a narrative's translation from medium to medium.

Paul Davis' text on adaptations of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is of use not only as an analysis of cross-medium translation; it provides specific insight into social and religious issues of the periods examined, powerful insight into the adaptational use of iconographics and visual semiotics, and finally, is more successful than Forry's text in providing understanding of the socio-aesthetic weight of the parent narrative as its process of adaptation is charted in its passage from, as Davis elegantly puts it, text to culture-text. Forry's text is ultimately less successful as an analysis of the importance of *Frankenstein* to its parent and adoptive cultures, spending far less time on such exploration, but is quite useful to students of nineteenth century British melodrama, burlesque, the literature of horror and specialists in the contemporary adaptation of the nineteenth century novel to its performative forms.

To begin with Davis' text: it is a work of careful scholarship and broad-based vision. Davis begins with the assumption that we are dealing with an important cultural artifact in Dickens original text, and his investigation of the nature of its subsequent adaptations and their content and relation to their engendering societies bears out his thesis. He divides his investigation into a probing of six time-frames: the atmosphere surrounding the production of the original narrative; the later Victorian era; the World War I to Black Monday period; the post-Crash decades of the 1930's and '40s; the "greening" decades

of the '60s and '70s; and finally, the 1980's. Davis then carefully traces and documents through semiotic, structural, dramaturgical and iconographic evidence the essential nature of the *Carol* and its forms throughout those periods, weaving a complex tale of development as the loci of interest and importance shift through time.

Perhaps more valuable than his revelations about the shifting foci of importance in the adaptations is Davis' central concept: that *A Christmas Carol* stands as an excellent exemplar of the creation of what he terms a "culture-text," wherein a specific narrative or text is absorbed into one or more cultures (for the purposes of his analysis, the temporal stages of British and then American cultures) so as to become part-and-parcel of its expressive vision, consistently readapted to serve uses that transform over time. The structural differences between text and culture-text are revealed by the fact that the cultural mind or memory contains details of the adaptational forms, thinking that they are essential parts of the original narrative, within which they do not appear at all: the original narrative has been subsumed into the group mind and serves to fuel the process of adaptation, but it is the body of adaptations, constantly changing throughout time, that reflects the culture's involvement with the themes and content of the now extended set of linked texts. Davis signals this distinction through his use of labels: the *Carol* to refer to the original narrative, and Carol to refer to the intricate body of cultural expression represented by the total set of adaptations.

The book, after setting out this premise in its earliest chapters, then begins the work of tracing the shifts in importance of focus within various printed editions and adaptations, utilizing a structurally thematic approach enlivened by references to social theory, iconographics and visual semiotics, all supported by copious illustrations from various print, theatrical and film sources in this attractive, large-format text. The result is a fascinating journey of exploration, as the *Carol* transforms itself from a book about Christmas to one about class struggle and economic rights, from a work about Cratchit as social victim to one about Scrooge as psychological cripple. Along the way we encounter the power of illustrators (and later, set designers and film editors) to transform perceptions of content, the influence of Freud on perceptions of Scrooge's past, and, ultimately, the work of Ed Meese and the Reaganites to justify and exculpate Scrooge as a practitioner of proper "trickle-down" economics, ending with the deconstruction of the story in Bill Murray's *Scrooged*. For students of the process by which cultures adapt and recycle themes, Paul Davis' *The Life and Times . . .* is valuable reading, and will be found to be delightful reading, as well.

Steven Earl Forry's *Hideous Progenies* is less successful, but does not set out to explore, as does Davis' work, the larger ramifications of the Frankenstein text as a cultural expression of themes of importance. Rather,

it is a more limited history of dramatic adaptations (it purports to deal with film adaptations as well, but short-changed them because of its limited approach to analysis). Even this limitation, which might have served to provide parentheses of focus, is not properly defined: the dust jacket of the text declares the book's subtitle to be *Dramatizations of "Frankenstein" from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*, but the title page of the book has it as . . . *from Mary Shelley to the Present*. There is, of course, a world of difference here: one might expect a text with the latter subtitle to contain, as does Davis', material about the original narrative that places it in a context from which the nature and importance of adaptations can be explored and contrasted, and no such material appears, beyond some cursory mention; one is therefore left to wonder as to the true title (and topic) of the entire work.

The book is divided into two sections. The first contains Forry's critical accounts of nineteenth century dramatizations (mostly British and Gallo-British), and these are of great interest and value to students of the period, the generic types explored, and the process of adaptation itself. Further, it possesses a value that, by contrast, may be cited as a minor failing of Davis' book: Forry demonstrates (if only by inference, for the investigation is not specifically developed) that market considerations, in addition to thematic, must be taken into account in exploring structural choices in the adaptational process--what will 'play' at the Adelphi is not what will play at The Prince of Wales. Davis, for his part, does not devote much attention to the market necessities of, say, an adaptation of his master text that is being made by MGM in 1940 (or, rather, assumes that such determinants of choice are, themselves, sociologically based beneath their commercial considerations).

On the other hand, Forry's critical section is too short to be considered a complete account of even his delimited area of investigation. It consists of 127 pages, which includes an inadequate twenty page Afterword on adaptations of the text from 1930 to the present (certainly the place for an extended complex discussion of the themes of science and technology versus the interests of society, and/or of changing views on the morality of science and its relationship to the noötics of creation). Even his chapter on the history of the text's adaptations in the early twentieth century is only twenty-seven pages, with notes. The largest coverage is reserved for an exploration of the nature of 19th century melodramatic and burlesque adaptations, and this is, by far, the best and most useful section of the analysis. The remainder of the text, however, is devoted to the presentation of complete texts of the most important early theatrical adaptations, including some unavailable in any other form; for that, students of a variety of specializations may be grateful.

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The Audience by Herbert Blau. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.

In his first book, *The Impossible Theater: A Manifesto* (1964), Herbert Blau caused what he would later describe as "immediate outrage" by declaring: "Give an audience a chance and it will certainly be wrong" (166). In the manifesto as a whole, Blau managed to combine something like the passionate impudence of a Bernard Shaw with the mystical eloquence of Gordon Craig and Antonin Artaud into an original new voice that railed against the theatrical establishment even as it upheld the redeeming possibilities of theater against the cold war terror of the times. Blau was then the co-director of the Actor's Workshop of San Francisco, and the adversarial tone of the epigraph and the book reflected his engagement with the ideological and logistical issues of a living theater. Blau went on to serve as co-director of the Repertory Theater of Lincoln Center in New York, and later to serve as artistic director of the experimental theater group KRAKEN. In the eighties, he began a different sort of assault on the field of dramatic theory in a series of wide-ranging and complex books and essays: *Blooded Thought: Occasions of Theatre* (1982), *Take up the Bodies: Theater at the Vanishing Point* (1982), and *The Eye of Prey: Subversions of the Postmodern* (1987). In the latter, Blau cited his own previous attack on the audience as "a preface to some reflections on the politics of representation and the discourse about it" (189). Even as he declared that theater "has become something of a model for theory" (xvii), Blau also declared his intention to explore how performance itself could subvert "the decentering momentum of the postmodern" (xviii). This collection, which also contains what is perhaps Blau's finest and most widely-known essay, "Universals of Performance," now itself seems a kind of preface to the monumental achievement of his new book, *The Audience*.

As one might put it, somewhat simplistically, Blau now instructs us that the terms of his former epigraph are simply inadequate to the problematics of the histrionic experience. On the one hand Blau concedes about the audience that "we simply do not know, in any reliable--no less ideal or accountable--sense, *who is there* nor, in the absence of the classical subject, *where to look*" (355). On the other hand, dwelling at length on the doubt, concealment, alienation and repression that seem to infect the theatrical

experience since its inception, Blau also suggests that an inevitability of error and misprision is, after all, the applause, delight, and wonder of our stage. *The Audience* is, it must be admitted, a challenging and often extremely difficult book. Again and again, Blau astonishes the reader with the range and variety of his references, with his ability to move from classical to modern theater and back again, and indeed, with his constant attempt to treat the whole history and phenomenon of audition as though it were susceptible to the very hegemonic coherence that the book itself is also so at pains to deny. That one might almost wonder if the book should have been called *The Theater* or *The Play* instead of its present title is both a tribute to the book's encyclopedic scope and an index of Blau's paradoxical strategy--looking *away* from the stage so as to illuminate what is seen and heard (and concealed) there.

Rather than articulating a specific, linear argument, Blau moves with what has been sometimes described as a circular logic through a series of overlapping points, arguing that the theatrical audience always takes the form of a "problematic" (25; 301), a process of "double alienation" (292), a phenomenon that, especially today, has no other choice "than to construct its own meanings, which also break up and form themselves anew" (274). He contends that

the audience . . . is not so much a mere congregation of people as a body of thought and desire. It does not exist before the play but is *initiated* or *precipitated* by it; it is not an entity to begin with but a consciousness constructed. The audience is what *happens* when, performing the signs and passwords of a play, something postulates itself and unfolds in response. That is a matter of subjectivity but also of historical process, subjectivity underwritten or, in the Freudian sense, overdetermined. The history of the drama records but also prompts the double unfolding of this equivocal dialectic. If the drama was self-reflexive in other periods, the theater of modernism has impacted that mode of consciousness. (25)

This passage also illustrates both the eloquence and the difficulty of what Blau has himself called his "elliptical" and "refractory" style. In the last sentence, to seize on one small example of this dense and multi-layered rhetoric, I believe Blau intends that almost painful double reference of the word "impact." He suggests, that is, that modern theater not only shapes (has an impact on) the self-reflexive discourses of modern consciousness, but also literally *impacts*, exerts a painful and constant com-pressure on what he aptly calls its "equivocal dialectic."

Blau himself is somewhat equivocal in his commitment to various poles of contemporary literary or dramatic theory. This is at least partially a

necessity, given what he declares to be the intricate complexity of his target. For, as Blau contends, the problematic of the audience forces us to consider (to cite just the first few topics on his much longer list) "issues of representation, repression, otherness, the politics of the unconscious, ideology and power" (25-6). Accordingly, the book tries to work through and within what Blau describes as "the critical tradition extending from Nietzsche through Brecht to Foucault and deconstruction" (176). At moments, it is impossible not to feel a certain reductiveness in the ease with which Blau conflates widely disparate, even mutually contradictory philosophic positions into something called "postmodernism" or "recent theory," as though their terminologies were mutually transparent. Indeed, Blau himself admits that "in recent commentary on the politics of representation the liability has been that the power which is everywhere and nowhere turns up in every period looking just about the same," and even that "this is a liability in what I have been saying myself" (342). Only a few pages later, however, we again find Blau referring to "the adventitious crossing of performance theory and psychoanalysis" and arguing that

this configuration pregnant with tensions has been absorbed very powerfully into the Lacanian notion of a 'temporal pulsation.' . . . These temporal pulsations, closures that are also openings, resemble in their momentariness the monadic structures of rehearsal in Wallace Stevens' poems, the fitful tracing of a portal. There are differences of intentionality or theorized affectivity . . . but the *gestus*, the Image, the Vortex, the verbal Icon, and the theatrical Ideogram share this *fitfulness* in both the psychic and formal senses. (351)

The vertiginous speed with which Blau first postulates a basic intersection of "performance theory and psychoanalysis" only to absorb it into an even more complex linkage of Lacan, Stevens, Brecht, high modernism and New Criticism tends to leave a reader struggling to catch up.

Blau also attempts to work on both sides of another basic divide in recent theatrical studies. He is professedly influenced, on the one hand, by the "performance theory" pioneered by Victor Turner and Richard Schechner--which tends to suggest a spectrum of commonality between primitive ritual and modern theater, and thus seeks to define what Blau himself calls "universals of performance." Blau's synthesizing methodology, his constant striking of parallels between different historical periods and theoretical approaches, is obviously in keeping with such a tendency. On the other hand, Blau seems equally committed to what might be considered a kind of "historicism" which (in either the old or "new" varieties) emphasizes by contrast the conditions and ideological mechanisms of a particular theatrical

tradition. For this is also a book which attempts to map the profound cultural shift constituted by modernism and its aftermath, a book which traces in detail the contemporary evolution of an increasingly self-conscious tradition of performance. Blau provides eloquent and luminous accounts of a wide variety of recent experimental theater, virtually all of whose most celebrated events he seems to have attended--from Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* "in a stone quarry in Villeneuve," which, for all of its magic, Blau finds "no match for the apocalyptic virulence that still rounds the earth's imagined corners right back to the Fertile Crescent" (32); to Robert Wilson's production of Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine*, in which Blau sees a masked "transcription and *symptom* of the rupture of representation" (111), to Lucian Pintilie's production of Pirandello's *Tonight We Improvise*, with its "instant feedback on video monitors," in which "art seemed to approach life with such resourcefulness it amplified the difference" (166).

Similarly, some of the most powerful passages in the book are those in which Blau reflects upon recent cultural history in relation to the performative impulse and observes the irony with which theater has recently overtaken life from the most unlikely of directions. Even as postmodern theorists complacently declare the closure of representation, other "people who have been oppressed by alienating representations suddenly find themselves with access to the image-making machines" (338), and a "mediocre actor" becomes President precisely by exploiting a mode of representation "which he uses by minimizing its appearance, telling us that *we* really run the show" (3). In the terms of Blau's famous epigraph, we come full circle to a realization that both sides mirror one another in the refraction of the Lacanian gaze, inevitably implicated in "the vice of representation" that is also "at the heart of commodity fetishism" (327). Or, as Blau seems implicitly to revise his epigraph, the theater has been given every conceivable chance--only to prove both that "the actor is wrong" *and* "the audience is wrong" (292).

Nevertheless, there is indeed a kind of subversion of postmodernism even within a text so deeply imbued with its theories and rhetorical strategies. That subversion takes the shape, finally, of a curiously traditional affirmation of "perception" over "participation" (381), an insistence that the death of representation has, so to speak, been much exaggerated. Such affirmations are perhaps inevitable within a text deliberately divided between an observation of timeless "universals" of the histrionic experience and a searching analysis of the on-going "crisis" in the history of an "exhausted" tradition (381). Blau, himself so long a player and participant in that tradition and crisis, finally defines the audience in almost bewilderingly broad terms as the "agency within us that, in taking on the appearance of being out of sight, more or less fitfully and questionably, keeps watch over perception" (382-3). As so often, we recognize the labyrinthine rhetorical (de)constructions, the sense of wheels within wheels,

and the elliptical grace with which Blau telescopes a cultural and material phenomenon into a mysterious internal "agency" which appears (so as) to disappear. Indeed, this book can sometimes itself seem strangely like certain instances of modern performance: requiring enormous concentration and ceaseless attention, at times maddeningly obscure, ponderous or repetitive; and yet--in passages like this one, or in ones "fitful and questionable" perception of its intricate and involuted unity--in the end not only rewarding but positively revelatory. Many of Blau's conclusions are perhaps best understood as re-beginnings, eloquent invitations to a continuing debate; and it is clear that serious students of performance and its theory will somehow have to come to terms both with the audience and *The Audience*.

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Histrionics: Three Plays by Thomas Bernhard. Trans. Peter Jansen and Kenneth Northcott. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Thomas Bernhard, in Europe--and especially France--one of the most frequently performed German-speaking playwrights outside a German-speaking country, is by comparison little known in the U.S. Furthermore, he has gained a reputation in this country mostly as a novelist, less so as a playwright. Although frequently discussed in intellectual circles, very few of his numerous plays have been performed in the United States.

The publication of an American translation of three representative Bernhard plays is therefore all the more noteworthy. *Histrionics*, a volume of plays translated by K. Northcott and P. Jansen, includes *A Party for Boris, Ritter, Dene, Voss*, and *Histrionics*

A Party for Boris, Bernhard's first play, already evinces many of the characteristics which later develop into the Bernhard style: long extended monologues filled with constructed repetitions which endow the speeches with the quality of a musical aria, and sentences which are not interrupted by commas or periods but simply running on, often being repeated several times with varying changes of word positions. The milieu of predominantly sick or crippled people which provides fertile ground for macabrely humorous scenes

is also classically Bernhardian. *A Party for Boris* consists of three acts, two prologues and a final act entitled "The Party." In the prologues, only two characters appear on stage: "the good woman," a legless rich elderly woman in whose house the action takes place, and Johanna, her servant. The Good Woman talks almost exclusively, and she tortures Johanna with her mad monomaniacal monologues; Johanna's role is reduced to listening, responding, echoing some phrases, tolerating insults, dressing and wheeling the Good Woman around in her chair. Here we also learn that the Good Woman, who may still feel attached to her deceased first husband, chose a second one, Boris, from the asylum for cripples, "the most wretched one/the ugliest" (34). Boris is her creature, "nothing" on his own (33), and the Good Woman treats her second husband with the same sadistic humiliation that also characterizes her behavior toward her servant Johanna. The final act presents the macabre 'party' which the Good Woman throws yearly for her husband Boris and which to him must seem more like a torture than a celebration. Thirteen legless cripples sit at the table, together with the Good Woman and the now also legless Johanna, and they entertain themselves with dark, confused, grotesquely humorous outcries. Only Boris does not speak; he expresses himself by beating the drum--a reference to Katrin's equally powerful act in Brecht's *Mother Courage?*--; and at the end of the party given supposedly in his honor, Boris dies. The Good Woman "bursts into horrible peals of laughter" (71) which suffocate her earlier neverending speeches.

The second play in this collection, *Ritter, Dene, Voss*, stems from a later period when Bernhard was concentrating his thoughts on the Wittgenstein family. Published in 1984, *Ritter, Dene, Voss* appeared only two years after Bernhard's novel *Wittgenstein's Nephew*, a literary and biographical account of Bernhard's friendship with Paul Wittgenstein. Voss, Ritter, and Dene are in fact three well-known actors at the Viennese Burgtheater who here play the roles of Ludwig Wittgenstein and his two sisters. Bernhard uses an alienation effect which seems almost Brechtian, in spite of the absurdity of several of the situations in the play: He displays the actors with their true identity and their personal names on stage and shows how they act out scenes in the Wittgenstein family. Voss represents a mixture of two characters: the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein and his nephew Paul, also a genius, though lazy and unproductive, who had to spend a great portion of his life in the insane asylum at Steinhof. The play turns around a dinner, with its three acts occurring "before midday dinner," "dinner," and "after dinner." The philosopher Voss is confronted with his sisters who have both turned to acting. Especially the elder sister Dene is obsessed with her brother and dedicates a great part of her life to him. Voss responds with little respect and almost ridicule, which may be allegorically read as the philosopher's despondent view on the theatrical art. Again, this is a mostly conversational drama, treating

some of Bernhard's favorite subjects--medicine, death, arts like theater, painting, and music--and also exhibiting some of the (self)-destructive qualities of many Bernhard dramas.

The final play in this selection, the most overtly self-reflective one, bears the title of the whole volume: *Histrionics*. Even though it appeared already in 1983, a year before *Ritter, Dene, Voss*, it is presented here as the last selection, since it questions the role of theater in society more than the preceding plays. In *Ritter, Dene, Voss* the two sisters are occasionally called "histrionics" (which in the German original is either "Schauspielerinnen" or "Theatermacherinnen"). Jansen and Northcott chose a very adequate translation of the German title "Der Theatermacher" as "Histrionics", thus preserving the ambiguity of the original which both refers to play-acting as well as to making a scene. The play, then, deals with a megalomaniac actor whose supposedly overwhelmingly ingenious show is interrupted by a thunderstorm at its very opening. *Histrionics* shows the most detailed and grotesque preparations for a performance which will never take place: The stage (within the stage) turns black, and the spectators leave before the show has even begun.

Peter Jansen's and Kenneth Northcott's translations follow Bernhard's texts very faithfully. As much as it is possible, they render Bernhard's often deliberately awkward sentence structures into English. Even though their translation is designed for actors on the stage, it occasionally takes on an academic tone by offering elaborate explanations. E.g. in *Ritter, Dene, Voss* they translate the word "Teeküche" in the stage directions with the following extended phrase: "a small kitchen (of a sort called a tea-kitchen in German, i.e. a sort of butler's pantry with facilities for the brewing of tea etc.)" (81). In general, the translation conveys the highly musical quality of Bernhard's language beautifully, with the possible exception of some almost untranslatable challenges: i.e. "cream puffs" (142-45) cannot quite convey all the images and musical overtones of "Brandteigkrapfen," but the task of translating the name for such an authentically Austrian desert seems virtually impossible. All in all, this is a highly successful volume of three characteristic Thomas Bernhard plays. Let us only hope that further available translations of his theater pieces will lead to increased performances on the American stage.

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The Playwrighting Self of Bernard Shaw by John A. Bertolini. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991.

Bernard Shaw is an imposing figure on the scene of British drama. The volume of works produced by him as well as the volume of works produced about him argues for his continuing significance. Socialists debate his politics, philosophers debate his ideas, and feminists problematicize his depictions of women. The amount of discourse on Shaw can intimidate one beginning a serious look at the figure of Shaw. John Bertolini in *The Playwrighting Self of Bernard Shaw* attempts to consolidate the discourse through concentrating on one aspect of Shaw, what he determines as the "essential" Shaw. While acknowledging that he "probably had more selves than most great writers" (1), Bertolini isolates Shaw's playwrighting self, focusing on how his plays were wrought (hence "playwrighting" rather than "playwriting"). The plays become the clues to what Shaw thought of himself as a writer of plays.

Several assumptions inform Bertolini's approach. The first arises from a "shavian paradox" in Shaw's definition of the playwright's activity. On the one hand, Shaw compares playwriting to cutting jigsaw puzzles. On the other, it is an inspired activity. This paradox leads Bertolini to look at the plays, on the one hand, as meticulously crafted systems with specific patterns of meaning. Simultaneously, this pattern radiates out of a controlling image, a source of inspiration. Bertolini, therefore, divines each play's master idea by concentrating on the pattern, what he compares to a musical score.

Second, the book assumes that Shaw intends his plays to be read and performed. Stating that Shaw deliberately strove to make the reading of his plays like the reading of novels, Bertolini reads Shaw's narrative descriptions for authoritative descriptions of tone, character and setting. In short, the stage directions provide a direct line to Shaw's intentions. They are treated as parts of the literary text rather than indices for performance. Bertolini is clear about his project:

My contra-deconstructionist assumption is that Shaw knew what he was about when he wrote his plays, and I attempt here to read his plays as written, to articulate their design, to put together the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle he cut out, showing how and why the pieces fit one another, not because the plays work like beautiful machines, but because they are composed and orchestrated like musical scores. (5)

Bertolini concentrates on six plays in particular--*Caesar and Cleopatra*, *Man and Superman*, *Major Barbara*, *The Doctor's Dilemma*, *Pygmalion*, and *Saint Joan*--although other plays like *The Devil's Disciple* and *Back to*

Methuselah are dealt with more than in passing. In these, writing tables and instruments of writing become a leitmotif for the presence of Shaw, as Bertolini searches for writers, artists and artist-figures as signs of Shaw's playwrighting self.

Each chapter examines an aspect of the playwright. Thus while *Caesar and Cleopatra* constructs Caesar as an ambiguous hero it also introduces the playwright as a figure of power. This is more explicit in the chapter on Shaw's one-acts, where Bertolini draws a direct parallel between the political ruler and playwright. Jack Tanner, the anarchist author of the "Revolutionist's Handbook," also functions for Bertolini as a figure of the playwright. However in this case the playwright is not so much the amoral gadfly as he is the generative father. In fact, Bertolini argues that in *Man and Superman*, Shaw explicitly links playwrighting with fatherhood.

Throughout the book and apparently Shaw's works there is no clear description of the playwrighting self. Rather, Bertolini constructs a dialogue exploring the various aspects of the playwright. Thus *The Doctor's Dilemma* with its doppelgänger theme becomes a self-conscious dialogue of the artist's function and reflects Shaw's ambivalence toward the artist's role. This ambivalence is seen in Bertolini's separate readings of *Major Barbara* and *Pygmalion*. While *Major Barbara* argues for the self finding and accepting its inheritance (through Barbara Undershaft's conversion from the Salvation Army to working for her father's munitions factory), *Pygmalion* dramatizes the playwright erasing his creative inheritance. In other words, Henry Higgins' anxiety about his mother motivates the assertion of his own creative powers through the transformation of Eliza Doolittle. It also parallels Shaw's anxiety of Shakespearean influence and Shaw's competition for control of the "Mother tongue." Finally, Bertolini argues that with *Saint Joan* Shaw allegorizes the imagination, isolating Joan into a metaphor of the source of artistic work.

Throughout the book, Bertolini traces Shaw's unresolved anxiety toward Shakespeare. The recurrence of this career-long struggle surfaces throughout several plays, including *Pygmalion* mentioned above. Thus, *Caesar and Cleopatra* is a "prequel" to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *Anthony and Cleopatra* and forces Shakespeare's plays into a secondary position. The Sierra Nevada where Jack Tanner dreams "Don Juan in Hell" in *Man and Superman* becomes a Shavian equivalent to Shakespeare's "green world" where Tanner must "confront his sexual identity and the necessity of growing up" (43). The struggle against the cultic figure of Britain's most famous playwright, therefore, determines how Shaw characterizes himself as a playwright. As a result, the short play, *Shakes versus Shav*, fittingly concluded a career that Bertolini sees as devoted to outdoing Shakespeare.

Bertolini explores the several aspects of the playwrighting self of Bernard Shaw as they present themselves in his plays. Each chapter stands on its own

as a competent reading of a Shavian drama; together they create a debate typical of Shaw in its complexity, subtlety and contradictions. Through Bertolini's construction Shaw emerges as a jigsaw puzzle himself. Though a complex system of selves, a pattern emerges through Bertolini's argument. The selves of Bernard Shaw radiate, like the master idea of his plays, from the master self of a playwrighting Bernard Shaw. For Bertolini the playwrighting self is Shaw's essential self. Bernard Shaw is essentially a playwright.

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Solkonge og Månekejser [The Sun King and the Emperor of the Moon] by Bent Holm. Copenhagen: Cyldendal, 1991.

During the latter part of the seventeenth century one of Louis XIV's "Ordinaire de la musique du Roy," Francois Fossard, collected prints, among them a significant number related to theatrical activities in Paris, including the *Théâtre Italien*, French farce, ballet and opera. Fossard is known from music history as a collector of, among other things, "Airs Italiens" together with Philidor. His work with Philidor was for the king. His collection of prints, however, was a personal project in which he eventually hoped to make the king interested. But, though initially, the king, as is well-known, was a great supporter of the theatre and of spectacle in general, he grew in his later years increasingly hostile towards the theatre and on May 14, 1697 he deported the *Théâtre Italien*. Fossard died in 1702 and in 1742 part of his collection was imported to Stockholm while another part ended up in Copenhagen. The Stockholm part of the collection was published in 1928 by Beijer and Duchartre as *Le recueil Fossard* and it is, I would hazard to guess, the source of most of the *Théâtre Italien* iconography we are exposed to in commedia dell'arte studies.

Bent Holm is a Danish dramaturg and scholar who during the past decade has been responsible for some of the most challenging dramaturgical analyses I have ever read. His authorship also includes two books on Dario Fo, many of whose plays he has translated into Danish. Dr. Holm's interest in commedia dell'arte and its iconography, thus, springs from theoretical as well as practical impulses.

The impetus for the director in Holm's investigation came when he studied a print of Arlequin as Jason in a triumphal procession. The image was composed as a carnival procession and it was dense with carnival icons. It was also evident that this picture in some manner was "quoting" many visual launchings of the heroic Louis XIV.

This nexus of signs provoked Holm into an analysis of the many carnival images repeated in the *Théâtre Italien* such as the use of cock feathers (a chthonic animal referring to gods of the underworld), kitchen utensils (indicating fire, indicating the underworld), the stealing of children (a la Saturn as Death and the Kinderfresser and the Narrenfresser figures), etc., all of which hinted at a connection with the underworld and its carnival expressions. Indeed, Holm convincingly establishes a genealogy for Arlequin which goes back to Herlechin, the demon leading his horde first described by Orderik Vitalis in 1125, but clearly a known figure before then. The figure Hellequin shows up in a variety of sources, including the *Roman de Fauvel* with its rich illustrations of charivari, as the king of the underworld. Holm also points out that there may well be a connection between the human figures showing spots of evil seeping from their skin, known for example from illustrations to Dante's *Inferno*, and the patches, "spots," on Arlequin's costume and the spots on the commedia dell'arte masks. Through this extensive iconographic and textual genealogical research, Holm establishes Arlequin, who made his first stage appearance in 1584, as a counter ruler, a king of misrule, a position which came sharply into focus in the performance of the *Théâtre Italien*, as Louis XIV after the religious wars was fashioned into the absolute ruler, the sun shining on France. Indeed, Arlequin did perform in various plays as a king, a prince, a "Grand Visir," and also as the Emperor of the Moon, the world of darkness.

Holm describes in detail throughout the book the binary set of images which operates between the Sun King and the King of Misrule. The distinctions and the ties between them grew ever stronger during the second part of the seventeenth century as Louis increasingly attempted to subjugate the "other," the irrational, the dream-like, the different.

Whereas the sheer data Holm has gathered would be sufficient to make this a valuable book, it is his analysis which makes it a superb piece of scholarship.

Throughout his prolific career Holm has expressed and exemplified his desire to break down the traditional barriers between academic research and theatrical practice. In *Solkonge og Månekejser*, he has effected the kind of research which furthers our knowledge of a central commedia dell'arte figure, develops an effective and convincing approach to iconographic analysis and which cannot help but have profound consequences for anyone working practically with this art form or its descendants.

Unfortunately, *Solkonge og Månekejser* is not available in English, a situation which hopefully will be remedied. However, the book does contain a brief synopsis in French which together with the prints reproduced in it will whet the appetite of the curious and give at least an introduction to Holm's revolutionary findings.

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Art as Spectacle: Images of the Entertainer Since Romanticism. By Naomi Ritter. Columbia, MO/London: University of Missouri Press, 1989. xx + 347 + illus.

Neither the title nor the many chapter subtitles tell us the subject of Naomi Ritter's book. Nor does the introduction truly foretell the book's content, which reveals, above all, the author's preoccupations. A teacher of German literature with fluency in French and a great enthusiasm for theater and film, Ritter has not strictly organized her book's mass of names, references and axiomatic pronouncements into ordered discussion, nor kept within the set period "since Romanticism." At the heart of Ritter's book is the neo-romantic problem central to the novelist Thomas Mann's early work, the antithesis between the artist or Bohemian and the solid citizen or bourgeois. Ritter writes too like a teacher or novelist, addressing the reader personally, as when she suggests in conclusion, ". . . the reader must feel almost as relieved as I do to have finished this histrionic tour" (313). One is amazed instead at the extent of the tour and at a mature scholar's disregard of one of her own numerous epigraphs, "Don't tell them everything you know" (313). Amazingly too a scholarly press has realized in handsome binding, paper and type with many illustrations a work without some of the usual back matter, that is, no list of illustrations or chronology, and with a bibliography which is neither full nor truly "selected," as it professes to be. Still, a more strictly delimited, impersonal book would have lacked some of the scope and enthusiasm which Ritter here displays.

Ritter's article, "Art and Androgyny: The Aerialist," in *Studies in 20th-Century Literature* (13:2, Summer 1989, 173-94) shows her capable of clarity

and restraint. The article concerns primarily the same antithesis between Bohemian and bourgeois. In her book she associates the Bohemian with the circus using a faint rosy photo of them as they appear in Frederico Fellini's film *The Clowns* for the book's dust jacket and also, black and white, as its last illustration (Fig. 34, p. 309).

In the introduction Ritter declares her intent of achieving clarity in the book as in her article. She means, she says, through "thematics" to "transcend a mere catalogue of comparable images," to show the culture and even "the essence of the time" (9). But she examines only two Fellini films from only one angle, his idea of the clown, though she promises thereby to unlock "the essential Fellini." Not Fellini, however, but the core dialectic of the early Mann informs the difference for the circus aerialist who in his art soars above the crowd, yet in bourgeois life remains the lowest of the low, a vagrant outcast, or even becomes the crowd's martyr like Christ. Ritter intends, she says, to examine in successive chapters this artist metaphor of sinner and saint first in literature, then in painting, ballet and theater, and finally in film. Inevitably with the aim of such encyclopedic coverage, Ritter loses clarity, following her circus enthusiasm on a course hither and thither, despite good intentions of limiting herself to a single theme.

Nor does Ritter observe limits in naming names. In the half-dozen pages of Chapter 2 headed "The Poet and the Clown" Ritter has taken up twice that many real figures and given facts about them; she has mentioned fictive images from poetry, theater, opera, graphics and journalism without deriving any clear concepts from the many names. Those from her set post-Romantic period receive no more analysis than those she mentions from mythology, such as Dionysus and Icarus, while academicians are cited as equals with authors, "ancients" with "moderns," thus Oskar Seidlin and George Steiner along with Franz Grillparzer and Adalbert Stifter. Some important problems she raises are solved by authority, from among her mind-boggling sweep of names.

Her next chapter, entitled "The Performer as Problem: What is Art?," takes its departure from Heinrich von Kleist's essay on the marionette theater. As Ritter summarizes it, the narrator of the piece hears a star dancer insist that a puppet on strings displays more grace than a human dancer because the puppet lacks self-consciousness, while the human in his self-awareness has lost the innocence of grace. Ritter also discusses other classic treatments of consciousness in the arts, Friedrich Schiller's essays, especially "On naive and sentimental literature," and its parallel in Kantian morality "On the aesthetic education of humankind." But in this connection Ritter does not raise the question so important to performers of inspiration, that is, the difference between the naive and the trained or conscious artists. Rather she darts off to a great panorama of examples, mostly not of performance, but of mentions in German and French literature about the loss of innocence, the sterility of

reason compared to feeling, and the self-admiration or Narcissism of the performer. Ritter turns this chapter's question inward away from the relation of heart versus head toward problems of health and sickness, survival and obsession. Admitting that Kafka's *Metamorphosis* is out-of-bounds since no performer is involved, she takes up this metaphor of the sensitive hero who dwindles and dies, while the less than caring family prospers in the sun. In the end she leaves the question, "What Is Art?" up to the reader.

Not consciousness and survival, but morality and the crowd's perception thereof are at stake in Chapter 4, "Heirs of Zarathustra." For Ritter makes the tight-rope walker, or rope-dancer, as she calls him, of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Also Sprach Zarathustra* not only her concrete embodiment of the circus performer, but also, like the aerialist, a symbol of the artist's transcendence of the crowd and hence, as Nietzsche has it, a metaphor for man's heroic leap beyond the merely human to the Superman. Chapter 4's first section, entitled "The Rope-Dancer," is actually an interesting comparison of tight-rope walkers in Goethe and Nietzsche. However, though Goethe wrote plays and Nietzsche took a performer as a key metaphor of his philosophy, neither contributed directly to art as spectacle since Romanticism. The spectacle, if any, of their literary art occurs in the mind, not in any performance.

Notions of the clown in the second series of four chapters differ greatly or even contradict each other. The evil buffoon who caused Nietzsche's rope-dancer to fall is quite unlike the acrobats whose leaps in Rilke's *Fifth Duino Elegy* symbolize highest human striving. Rather they stand serene and distant in Picasso's painting, "Les Saltimbanques" ("The Acrobats"), which Ritter reproduces (152), for Rilke lived with it for a time in Herthe König's Munich house (1915) while working on the *Elegies*. Ritter quotes lines inscribed on another of her illustrations, this one by Callot showing the travelling players' wagon, which reminds how many different set roles for clowns of different character were included in the commedia dell'arte tradition.

Ritter narrows down her penultimate chapter on film to two directors, Bergman and Fellini. She differentiates between two basic antithetical types, the exalted and the ribald clown, that is, the martyred pure innocent and the cruelly oppressive performer. Her use of examples from the two great directors results in valuable interpretations and interesting comparisons of their often puzzling work. In this, as in the preceding "histrionic" chapter Ritter has exercised restraint and refrained from mentioning many exploitations of the circus theme by more film makers.

Ritter does not really break out of the bounds of her own fields of English, French and German. Other literatures and, above all, a great "art as spectacle" opera are omitted in Ritter's treatment of the fascinating subject she has attempted and never quite defines. Still, this is a subject of great interest

to us all and Ritter has here made an all too enthusiastic and encyclopedic effort to encompass it.

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Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture by George Lipsitz. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990.

This book will serve as an excellent introduction to the scholarly, in-depth analysis of popular culture for those who have not examined that subject closely; for students and scholars of popular culture--or, more specifically, what the creators of popular culture are trying to say and what is leading them to say it--this book will be a welcome and enlightening addition to your personal canon.

The real value of George Lipsitz's well-crafted and intriguing look at popular American culture lies in the broad range of cultural manifestations that the book examines, and its success in demonstrating that these many different forms of popular expression contain at their cores much the same desperate, almost subversive, search for lost paradigms. The author views various forms of popular culture and mass-consumption entertainment in America from 1945 to the present through the lens of what he terms "collective memory," setting as his task the demonstration of "how the infinitely renewable present of electronic mass media creates a crisis for collective memory, and how collective memory decisively frames the production and reception of commercial culture" (vii).

Lipsitz is decisive, too, in his historically materialistic view of the generation of mass consumption culture, firmly placing the origination of popular cultural visions within a context of developing class struggles, economic concerns, and reaction to manipulation by the forces of market capitalism and consumer-oriented devices and desires; Lipsitz positions popular culture as being a reaction of collective memory to conflicting, consumption-oriented market concerns imposed from without by a dominating discourse. The forms examined are thus seen as attempts on the part of social discourses being replaced by other, market-oriented or class-related forces (or minority, "fringe"

cultural visions being threatened by the homogenizing power of more dominant discourses) to assert themselves in an expression of the validity of their own cultural perspectives.

The subjects Lipsitz examines vary widely, from the 1950s era television situation comedies, the explosion of rock music, the popular novel, "B" movies, and Carnival as celebrated by the contemporary African-American population of New Orleans. It is in the application of Lipsitz's searching for the challenged "collective memory" that is, through the dynamic of opposition to a dominating discourse, finding a dialectical outlet in popular cultural expression, that the strength and power of Lipsitz's book resides: That so many varied forms of popular culture present the same dialectical, synthetic structure of generation is an indication of the book's value as a guide to the process whereby the culture of earlier periods becomes the subversive (sometimes quasi-, sometimes more overt) expression of the needs of collective popular memory to express its concerns over the manner in which cultural control is being wrested from them.

Throughout, Lipsitz's assertion that the content of popular cultural manifestations are often oppositional to the dominating discourse is upheld and well-proven by his examples and analyses. Of particular interest is his examination of selected examples of the 1950s television situation comedies, most notably *The Life of Riley* and *I Remember Mama*. The true value of any text of this nature is the extent to which one feels compelled to adopt the author's process and extend it to a consideration of one's own examples, and I found myself doing just that. Lipsitz's analysis of *I Remember Mama*, for example, follows the adaptation of the family's saga from novel, to play, to television show, and clearly delineates the struggle to maintain the values of family, strength against adversity, work ethic, etc., that define the original, as the economic structures of the society that gave birth to the original narrative change and evolve into one that emphasizes disposable manufacturing, consumerism linked to economic class-consciousness, eroded work ethic and the problematic effects of increasing urbanization. The result, by the time of the television variant of the theme, is a clear struggle to express values that have become part of an outmoded collective memory, albeit one that still exerts a strong, positive nostalgic pull. Using the same methodology, it is easier to understand the advent of, say, the television Western, which can be seen as a desperate attempt on the part of a more urbanized, post-World War populace under the effective control of a more highly centralized national government and consumer-oriented market to express in encoded form a collective memory of a time when individual power had far greater sway and acted far more decisively to structure its own environment. In point of fact, in a time when growth of assembly line manufacturing, the flourishing of men in gray flannel suits, and the reduction of the worker/consumer into the role

of a cog conspired to threaten the very nature of personal individuality, it is hard not to expect popular entertainment to assume forms in which individuals become the all-powerful arbiters of morals and structure against the encroachment of social chaos or the powers of perceived evil: the Western, the detection drama, the court procedural.

Lipsitz is also correct in pointing out that this thematic dialectic may express itself in technique as well as content: his analyses of two major fringe or "B" film makers of the middle of the century point out that rejection of the dominant techniques in favor of more marginalized genre-forms and structural elements may function as aesthetic choices, serving to emphasize thematics.

This well-written and enjoyable text will provide valuable material to those interested in popular culture in general, or specialists in film, music, television, cultural responses, or the process of adaptation. It is definitely worth reading.

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A Companion to the Medieval Theatre edited by Ronald W. Vince. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1989.

Ronald W. Vince points out in the introduction to *A Companion to the Medieval Theatre* that the theatre and drama of the Middle Ages too often gets "proportionally short shrift" in general histories of the theatre, despite the staggeringly diverse and vital dramatic forms that emerged in those times.

Vince explains that he and his collaborators will examine, in approximately two-hundred and fifty entries, the theatres of the principal linguistic areas (the British Isles, France, Germany, Iberia, Italy, Scandinavia, the Low Countries, and Eastern Europe) and dramatic forms and genres such as liturgical drama, Passion and saint plays, morality plays, folk drama, and Humanist drama. Some of the more fascinating entries cover costuming, acting, pageantry, music, court entertainments, dance, and tournaments.

A Companion to the Medieval Theatre emphasizes performance aspects over literary matters which bring the political, religious, and social significance of the era's theatrical forms into clear focus. Generally excellent essays, cross-

referencing and indexes, and a useful chronology and bibliography contribute to capturing an era (roughly, 900 to 1500) that is often inaccessible to all but the most devoted scholars or, worse yet, misunderstood as a time of static performance practices and plays with homogeneous themes. *A Companion to the Medieval Theatre* is a significant contribution that should be valued by the general reader as well as the advanced scholar.

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The Critics' Canon. Standards of Theatrical Reviewing in America by Richard H. Palmer. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1988.

Critics, and their function, both for the artist and the audience, continue to be a controversial and unresolved topic in the modern theatre. Richard H. Palmer's *The Critics' Canon. Standards of Theatrical Reviewing in America* will do little to dispel the controversial nature of the critic's role, but his wide-ranging discussion provides some understanding of the different ways in which critics approach their task, and the different ways they are perceived by their readers. Palmer is less effective in analyzing critical standards and aesthetic and journalistic problems and pressures on critics in America today.

Palmer has systematically appraised reviews of three-hundred plays and musicals produced throughout the United States during the 1986-87 season. He devotes chapters to various production elements in an attempt to illuminate how critics have approached discussing acting, dramatic literature, directing, music, choreography, the technical aspects, and the audience itself. Palmer's discussion is clear, but often too elementary for anyone but the uninitiated. At its best, Palmer's survey is broadly inclusive of critical examinations of theatrical work in commercial regional theatres, stretching beyond the bounds of the New York theatre.

Although Palmer admirably suggests that he will avoid "critic-bashing," it seems an inexcusable omission to leave out an examination of the controversy surrounding the reviews of John Simon. For many years, Simon's elegantly written, knowledgeable reviews have outraged even his most devoted followers on the very significant issues of color-blind casting and sexism in today's theatre. Sticking close to matters of critical style and aesthetic issues, Palmer

has unfortunately avoided many of the social, religious, and political issues that certainly influence artists and audiences, as well as critics, in their perceptions of theatre and drama.

As an introductory "how to" manual for those interested in dramatic criticism, *The Critics' Canon. Standards of Theatrical Reviewing in America* is a useful study. But for those interested in a deeper analysis of the nature of dramatic criticism in the contemporary theatre, this book will be a disappointment.

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A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800 by Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans. Vols. 1-16. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973-1992. Illustrated.

A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers, and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800, a sixteen volume collection by Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, will be complete in 1992 (fourteen volumes have appeared thus far, the first in 1973). It is an incomparable resource of significance to those interested in one of the most exhilarating eras in British theatre and drama.

The handsomely bound and printed volumes (most running to four-hundred or more pages) feature entries which offer at the very least the bare bones of biographical fact. Major figures are granted lengthy entries (Mrs. Siddons rates sixty-seven pages, her brother, John Philip Kemble, forty-eight) which, in many cases, include listings of portraits, quotes from contemporary critics, excerpts of diary entries, several illustrations, and mention of significant biographies. The range of the entries is wide, including major dramatists, managers, and actors (entries even appear for actors of earlier and later eras who slightly overlap; for example, Edmund Kean, a nineteenth century figure, is given a small entry) along with the seemingly insignificant, such as a dresser or the inventor of the tuning fork (John Shore).

The major entries are generally superb. Mrs. Siddons, certainly one of the brightest talents of the period, is poignantly drawn by the authors as a

driven woman required to support a large family, despite health problems and a husband unable to find steady employment. Her entry is capped by William Hazlitt's lament upon her retirement, in which he wondered who could now "sit majestic on the throne of tragedy--a Goddess . . .?" Even the most obscure individuals are noted in such a way as to evoke the spirit of the times. For example, a small entry appears on Robert Aron, "one of many strollers cited as mountebanks and required to pay town constables 2s. a day, according to a notice in the *Post Man* of 8 September 1702. It is not clear whether or not he was active in London" (Volume One 127).

The exhaustive scholarship is impressive in its scope and clarity. Well-known figures are recreated as we have always known them, but with a sharpness and humanity that is rare. The true triumph of this work, however, is that many obscure participants are brought vividly to life. The writing is precise and wholly entertaining throughout, with the flamboyance and eccentricity of the stage life of the era always in the forefront.

Each volume is illustrated with well-reproduced black-and-white portraits or surviving artifacts (such as a 1774 contract between David Garrick and Mrs. Abington or a letter of agreement signed by Colley Cibber and Christopher Rich), and the first ten volumes contain a section of extra illustrations at the back which include contemporary views of London, theatre exteriors and interiors, satiric portraits, significant documents, music, designs and stage machinery, operatic scenes, and fringe theatricals including pleasure gardens, circuses, fairs, masquerades, and minor and provincial theatres. *A Biographical Dictionary* will certainly find its welcome place as a major resource on the vigorous seventeenth and eighteenth century English stage. No library or scholar's bookshelf should be without it.

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Supplement: Cognitive Science and Cinema

