

This is a book to be dipped into. Some dippings produce rethinkings and encourage or demand a basic reorientation of approach. Too many others tend to illustrate a theoretical method or problematic, rather than either break new ground or make fresh illuminations. The book is rather like a collection of journal articles (a significant minority are rather card-indexy). The editorial introductions give very elegantly condensed outlines of the various fields, each taking a declarably partial journey from basics (the Saussurean sign, the Freudian project) to fields of contestation (especially around the 'post' discourses). They are rather too condensed to support unaided undergraduate reading, but make useful maps.

The contraction of this excellent material leaves the book not quite the 'comprehensive introduction to critical theory's rich and diverse contribution' to the study of performance its blurb claims it to be, but it has many stimulating parts of lasting use-value.

MICK WALLIS

*Ellen Donkin and Susan Clement, eds.*  
**Upstaging Big Daddy: Directing Theatre as if Gender and Race Matter**

Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993.  
329 p. \$42.50 (hbk), \$16.95 (pbk).  
ISBN 0-472-09503-X (hbk), 0-472-06503-3 (pbk).

This is a very important book, written by and intended for a wide range of people, including theatre practitioners as well as academics and students. The approach is innovative: theatre directors offer insights into the practical challenges posed by taking a gender-aware and/or race-aware approach to the making (and watching, and analyzing) of theatre, while academic critics discuss the relationship between theory and practice, somehow managing, for the most part, to avoid extensive use of jargon and to support their arguments with clear examples from plays and productions.

Subjects covered include feminist theory(ies) and theatre practice(s), white directors approaching the work of black playwrights, subverting the canon, cross-gender performance, 'a model for men directing feminist plays', and a feminist director's insights into 'surviving the reviews'. Most but not all of the examples are taken from American theatre, but Cixous, Churchill and Stein also feature prominently, and the American focus is enriched by the diversity of ethnicities and perspectives of the book's authors and subjects. Directors and actors will find the book useful in their work, as will academics writing on or teaching about the complicated subject of contemporary theatres, when indeed gender and race *do* matter, in life as on the stage.

LIZBETH GOODMAN

*Marco de Marinis, trans. Áine O'Healy*

**The Semiotics of Performance**

Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.  
266 p. £32.50.  
ISBN 0-253-31686-3.

The English-speaking field of theatre semiotics is constantly hindered by key texts remaining untranslated. *The Semiotics of Performance*, the English translation of a study first published in Italian in 1982, is, therefore, a belated but welcome addition to the field. The study opens with a consideration of the usefulness of semiotics in theatre, and an examination of the dramatic text, highlighting and developing the analysis of relations between the dramatic and performance texts. De Marinis is, however, centrally concerned with understanding the 'performance text' as a 'theoretical object of study', commenting on the internal codification of the 'text', and the 'determining' function of the cultural context. He also explores the role of the spectator as 'collective receiver' in the process of theatrical communication and the production of meaning. Despite a system of 'user friendly' headings and sub-headings, the study is too specialized for undergraduate needs, but is a valuable volume for tutors and postgraduates with an expertise in semiotics and performance analysis.

ELAINE ASTON

*Erika Fischer-Lichte,*

*trans. Jeremy Gaines and Doris L. Jones*

**The Semiotics of Theater**

Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.  
336 p. £37.50.  
ISBN 0-253-32237-5.

Erudite and meticulous, this book, although by no means yielding easily, is nevertheless accessible to readers who have not invested masses of time in grappling with the theories of semiotics. The main points of the semiotic groupings at play today are covered: Barthes, Greimas, Kristeva, and, very usefully, Diderot on the French side of the spectrum; Lessing, in particular, at the German end, with Gadamer on the issue of understanding; Lotman, the Prague structuralists, and the Americans, especially Birdwhistell on body motion. These are woven into the author's discussions, notably of gesture in eighteenth-century German theatre and of such head-crunchers as 'performance as theatrical text'. What distinguishes this book is its premise that sign systems (linguistic, kinesic, spatial, and so on, each detailed clearly) exist not in abstract but in cultures and that the theatre necessarily draws on their cultural specificity. It is therefore disappointing to see the author working primarily with a global, homogeneous notion of culture (including