Book Reviews

Modernism to Realism on the Soviet Stage, Tairov-Vakhtangov-Okhlopov. By Nick Worrall. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

The Theater of Yuri Lyubimov, Art and Politics at the Taganka Theater in Moscow. By Alexander Gershkovich. Trans. Michael Yurieff. Paragon House, 1989.

The Soviet years of Russia's theatrical life have produced relatively little in the way of great dramatic texts--playwrights are particularly susceptible to the wrath of the censor or the pressures of the political machine. The director, rather, has been the guiding spirit of twentieth-century Soviet theatre as it has frequently led the world in innovation and experimentation.

Two recent books, one by Nick Worrall, the other by Alexander Gershkovich, attempt to place four directors in a historical context while critically evaluating their varying styles and approaches. Each author provides biographical information, excerpts from critical reviews, commentary from the directors themselves, photographs and sketches, timelines, and descriptions of significant productions. Although Worrall's scholarly and systematic style differs considerably from Gershkovich's more ebullient and laudatory writing, the books are both substantial complements to already-existing accounts of the work of the more famous Meyerhold and Stanislavsky.

Worrall's text, *Modernism to Realism on the Soviet Stage*, devotes a chapter each to the directing careers of Alexander Tairov, Evgene Vakhtangov, and Nikolai Okhlopkov. Their names, while familiar still to Soviet theatregoers, are largely unknown to many theatre generalists who associate the post-revolutionary years in the Soviet Union with the rise and fall of Vsevolod Meyerhold. Indeed, the figure of Meyerhold hovers over the lives of these three men, influencing them in their struggles to create new forms for a new society.

An extremely well-stated introductory chapter is a goldmine of contextual information which traces Russian theatre from the 1898 opening of the Moscow Art Theatre to the death of Okhlopkov in the 1960s. The facts are not new, but Worrall draws them all together to show inter-connections, and provides brief summaries of the political changes which shaped theatre over the course of the decades. In addition, a chronological outline compares

historical events to theatrical ones, a useful reference for anyone interested in the role of the arts in this period.

This complete and complex preamble puts the work of Worrall's three directors into perspective, and makes the book extremely accessible for newcomers to the field of Russian theatre studies. Throughout the book, in fact, Worrall is careful to provide numerous explanatory footnotes which give additional biographical or factual information, as well as suggestions for further reading. Again with an eye on the non-specialist, Worrall mentions specifically which English-language materials are most helpful, and in the body of his text quotes works in English only.

The book's first chapter is its densest, due to the prolific output of director Alexander Tairov. Consequently, this chapter (more than the following ones) is fragmented, a whirlwind tour from one production concept to the next which often fails to provide a sense of the relative significance of each work. Worrall begins by explaining why the influential director is virtually unknown outside of his native land: the lack of archival material (compared to the relative abundance of Meyerhold resources), and the lack of a clear and influential heir to his tradition. That tradition is described but never spelled out in the book. Tairov objected to the elevation of the scenic artist, and the consequent disrespect for the actor which he associated with Meyerhold's practices; rather, he desired a theatre centered around the acting collective, in which *all* production elements contribute equally to the totality of the work. Music works as a unifying element, and rhythm affects everything from the acting pace to the scenic design. The important constructivist scenic designer Alexandra Exter worked with Tairov on such works as *Famira Kifared* (1916) which promoted a return to the Dionysian basis of drama, and Wilde's *Salomé* (1917), which Worrall calls "rather an incongruous choice when seen against the background of world-shaking events such as the revolution" (29). Tairov's other key collaborator was his wife, the actress Alisa Koonen, whom he met in 1909. She created some of the most memorable roles in the Kamerny Theatre repertoire, and perhaps came closest to embodying Tairov's concept of the "master-actor," who must develop a flexible body and voice.

The list of Tairov's productions is so diverse as to seem random--from the melodramatic *Adrienne LeCouvreur* to the *commedia*-influenced *Princess Brambilla* to the Soviet epic *Optimistic Tragedy*, the director continued to challenge himself and his audience throughout his career. Needless to say, Soviet critics expected a more consistent ideology, so that his firing in 1949 (and death in 1950) was the end of an often misunderstood life in the theatre.

In contrast to Tairov, Evgene Vakhtangov was and continues to be an almost sainted figure, who experienced little official opposition during his career, and remains one of the most respected names in Soviet theatre history. His work is usually perceived, by Soviet and non-Soviet scholars alike, as a bridge between Stanislavsky's realism and Meyerhold's "formalism." Although

the influences of each style are found in his productions, to see Vakhtangov as a convenient middleman is to ignore his unique contribution to the theatre.

Vakhtangov's output was relatively small, but his spirit was kept alive by his followers Alexei Popov and Ruben Simonov. He began as an acting student at the Moscow Art Theatre, and by 1913 had his own workshop, the Third Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre. Although his earliest work was strongly influenced by Stanislavsky's quest for inner truth in acting, his most significant productions, such as *The Miracle of Saint Anthony* and *Princess Turandot*, emphasized mathematical precision and external detail. Worrall discusses these major works at length, with a blow by blow description of *Turandot*; unfortunately, Worrall's prose is closer to reportage than evaluation or analysis. Quite often, the reader must draw her or his own conclusions about the importance of the facts and details mentioned.

Worrall's picture of Nikolai Okhlopkov is his most evocative. Okhlopkov is depicted as a larger-than-life personality, whose first production was a mass spectacle for an audience of 30,000. His work consistently manipulated the traditionally static actor-audience relationship, creating inter-penetrating stage space, and moments for personal contact of performer and spectator (as in Gorky's *Mother*, when the mother asks an audience member to hold her loaf of bread). A true *auteur*, Okhlopkov turned poorly-conceived scripts into full-blown patriotic spectacles. Because spatial arrangement was a primary element in his staging, the numerous photographs in this section are indispensable; missing, however, is insight into Okhlopkov's approach to acting, always an important consideration in the history of Russian/Soviet directing.

The personal element is largely missing from these three accounts, so that we learn little of the men's daily lives. Worrall is at his best when describing the *mise-en-scéne* of individual works, often giving the impression that he himself attended the performance in question. Note this passage about Tairov's *Romeo and Juliet*: "The coloured masses of materials, the gleam of their surfaces and the style of their cut. . . the play of volumes in the cascading steps. . . all had the effect of multiplying the movement of the figures" (37). Unfortunately, although Worrall frequently puts a footnote number after such statements, the reader is often unable to determine the exact source of (and therefore the point of view being expressed in) his detailed descriptions. Despite such ambiguities and the overall lack of critical commentary, Worrall's work is a thorough and accessible scholarly endeavor.

Without a doubt, the most significant Soviet director of the past three decades is Yuri Lyubimov, longtime head of Moscow's famed Taganka Theatre. Since 1964, the Taganka has consistently challenged both audience expectations and authoritarian restrictions to create a dynamic and meaningful theatre experience for its loyal audience.

Alexander Gershkovich, author of *The Theater of Lyubimov*, is a theatre critic and historian who emigrated from the Soviet Union to the U.S. in 1981;

portions of the book were written in each country. Thus, he advises in his preface, the reader must look between the lines to discover when the narrative voice is that of a free emigré, and when that of a cautious Soviet critic. And indeed the book does vacillate between candid opinion and more distanced appraisals; it is a highly personalized, loosely structured, meandering but insightful account of Lyubimov's career, and of the significance of his work in the hearts and minds of the Soviet people. That Gershkovich was there himself--attending rehearsals, meetings, performances--out-weighs any objections one might have to his non-scholarly style.

Gershkovich's book commences with the beginning of the end: the 1977 denunciation of the Taganka Theatre published in *Pravda*. From there we travel both forward and backward in time, to Lyubimov's early career as an actor and director, through the Taganka's history of challenging and often-banned productions, to what the author views as the end of the Taganka: Lyubimov's loss of citizenship in 1984. Although the book's section on Lyubimov's work in exile takes us from 1983 through 1988 (when Lyubimov visits his theatre for the first time in five years), Gershkovich could not have known the extent of the sweeping changes that would follow: welcoming Lyubimov back as an official artistic force in the theatre, restoring his name to the Taganka's official posters and programs, and finally permitting works such as his *Master and Margarita* to see the light of the stage. Although Gershkovich may have predicted the end of the Taganka too soon, without a doubt the unified and devoted audience who frequented that theatre from 1964 to 1984 is gone forever, as today's Muscovites find more direct means of self-expression.

The cult status of actor-poet-musician Vladimir Vysotsky is scarcely fathomable to Western readers; like the Czechoslavakian playwright (now president) Vaclav Havel, Vysotsky was the voice of his generation, a court jester singing out the truth, representing an individual's opposition to the fraud and deception around him. Gershkovich shows us the man Vysotsky in several ways: by depicting his funeral in 1980, attended by thousands of mourners; by discussing Vysotsky's dark portrayal of Hamlet; by presenting a detailed account of *In Memory of Vysotsky*, the Taganka company's 1981 tribute to their departed friend. This piece, built around the framework of *Hamlet*, contained dozens of Vysotsky's poems and songs, from which Gershkovich quotes frequently--these citations evoke Vystosky's paradoxical (and characteristically Soviet) blend of optimism/pessimism, and create this book's most memorable images.

Where Gershkovich does not fare so well is in the re-creation of Lyubimov's complex *mise-en-scéne*. Lyubimov has been accused (as Meyerhold was) of subordinating the freedom of his actors to the needs of the staging, of ruling over every onstage moment with a tyrant's control. This reviewer, having seen several Lyubimov productions, can attest to the fact that the actors are only one element of a complex pattern in which light and shadow, sound,

and setting are all tightly interwoven. Gershkovich's prose, despite the accessible translation by Michael Yurieff, can only give the sketchy outline of these vivid and dynamic images. In his third chapter, Gershkovich describes several representative productions, from 1965's *Ten Days That Shook the World* (an eclectic and emotional montage piece) to 1981's *Three Sisters* (which placed the sisters' Moscow in a dialectical relationship to the Moscow just outside the Taganka's walls). Despite their limitations, these discussions are valuable and tantalizing introductions for readers who may want to do further investigations into individual productions.

Other valuable resources include a list of the Taganka's repertoire from 1964 to 1984, including those shows never allowed to be performed, and two intriguing essays by Lyubimov himself. Lyubimov is a lucid and capable writer, and makes a strong case for the interdependence of the director and the actor--unfortunately no dates are given for the essays, so that the reader cannot place them in the context of Lyubimov's career.

Although Gershkovich concludes his book with the banning of *Boris Gudonov*, the exile of Lyubimov, and the story of Anatoly Efros' uncomfortable tenure at the Taganka, the work overall is an idealistic tribute to the power of Lyubmiov's work, of his theatre. The stifling atmosphere of Soviet bureaucracy was for twenty years a formidable opponent which, at the same time, helped to create a marvelous body of work. The history of the Taganka continues, but *The Theater of Yuri Lyubimov* is an important first step towards the evaluation of its history and significance.

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Text and Supertext in Ibsen's Drama. By Brian Johnston. Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989.

In his highly provocative book *Text and Supertext in Ibsen's Drama*, Brian Johnston contends that modern Ibsen interpretation has severely underestimated the scope of Ibsen's vision and the magnitude of his achievement as a major world artist. The reason, according to Johnston, is that we have mistakenly attributed Ibsen's modernity to his use of realism as a dramatic technique. "The cost of this maneuver," says Johnston, "has been to make Ibsen universal but trivial." Such interpretation ignores *what* Ibsen wrote in favor of *how* he wrote it. It discounts the real substance of Ibsen's texts: their imagery, their range of reference, their cultural and historical reverberations, and their aesthetic nature as scripts written for theatrical performance.

According to Johnston, what is most ignored is the manner in which Ibsen "adapts and extends the terms of his artform in order to create authentic and ambitious artistic structures." It is these very structures--the limitations, boundaries and rigors Ibsen imposes upon himself--which establish the terms of his artistry. In Johnston's words, "the tightrope he sets up defines and

makes more consequential the nature of his artistic gestures." What Johnston objects to is the fact that modern academicians focus more on Ibsen's "tightrope"--his realism--than on his "artistic gestures." Interestingly, Johnston believes it was the "nonacademic" thinkers of the nineteenth century who grasped the true measure of Ibsen--George Bernard Shaw, Henry James, James Joyce, Oscar Wilde, Lou Salome, Emma Goldman, Rainer Maria Rilke, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Thomas Mann, and others who more clearly understood the nature of Ibsen's art. As Johnston writes, "to his contemporaries Ibsen was more like Jean Genet in our day" (2).

Johnston attempts to establish Ibsen as the heir to the Romantic movement as well as the creator of the new realist drama. Consequently, Ibsen's major plays attempt to depict the conflict between the modern individual psyche and Romanticism's Hegelian concept of universal human identity. Ibsen's achievement, says Johnston, is his uniting of particulars to universals. The range of human experience is reflected in the simple, personal stories of his characters. Like other great dramatists, it is Ibsen's "supertext," the way his plays operate on various layers of meaning simultaneously, which gives such great dimension to his work. According to Johnston, Ibsen extended these secondary meanings as far as his imagination would allow.

Johnston believes that Ibsen gradually evolved his own mythology, "a cosmos active with universal forces, that allowed him to endow his images of modern reality with universal power" (87). For example, if we examine the text of a realist play such as *Ghosts*, "we should be able to see how it builds up the widest-ranging historical/cultural argument by endowing its few individual characters with immense symbolic identity when juxtaposed to each other" (87). The result of such an examination is typical of Ibsen: various ideas and beliefs are thrown into conflict with one another. But Johnston maintains that Ibsen does not put forward arguments simply for the sake of playing them against each other. Nor are they meant to express any sort of treatise upon which we are supposed to act. Rather, Ibsen's "argument" is "enacted, onstage, as a gathering together of spiritual-cultural powers and forces which Ibsen believes our theatre should contain" (188). In this way, Ibsen inherits the mythic traditions of the Greek dramatists, and he is free to draw upon archetypal figures (Jakob Engstrand, "the fallen man"; Pastor Manders, "the Pauline priest"; Oswald, "the prodigal son") to present his dramatic argument.

Readers familiar with Johnston's 1975 book, *The Ibsen Cycle* (Boston: Twayne Publications) will find Johnston's new work a worthy sequel. Though occasionally retracing his earlier steps, Johnston generally expands his original thesis to reveal the structures and textures of the twelve realist plays (from *Pillars of Society* to *When We Dead Awaken*) which Johnston views as a single cyclical work. By surveying critical attitudes that still inhibit recognition of Ibsen's real genius, and by examining the supertextual resonance of his realist plays, Johnston clearly shows that we still have much to learn about Ibsen.

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Samuel Beckett. By Andrew K. Kennedy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Beckett in Performance. By Jonathan Kalb. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Both of these works were published several months before the death of the man whom his friend Hugh Kenner called "the end of 20th-century modernism." Both, however, serve a summary function, gathering in the significant achievements of a unique literary and dramatic career and also making some connection both with contemporary developments and with that modernist revolution he did so much to shape. That said, it should be emphasized that they are very different books with very different missions. The former is an exemplary entry in the Cambridge series, "Introductory Critical Studies," the latter a stimulating polemic concerning the nature of the relationship between playwright and performance, as well as a survey of actual theatrical practice.

Kennedy's volume performs its introductory function well in part because it does not yield to the natural temptation to simplify an intrinsically problematic subject. There is a useful introduction covering major points of Beckett's biography, and here and elsewhere the author connects the major themes and preoccupations to that context. In doing so, however, he does not neglect the profoundly enigmatic nature of the life and the work: "This book does not aim to subordinate the Beckett mythology to any particular environment or system of ideas, but rather to find the points where the writing and the ideas connect" (3).

The urge to probe for the ideas lurking within Beckett's spare and unaccommodating textures is well-nigh universal, of course. This is in part simply because of his refusal to explore ideas and themes in ways that are recognizably connected to the forms of dramatic (or novelistic) conflict and resolution that have gone before. The unprecedented nature of the result in the prose, and especially in the drama, has led many a critic (and many a director) to sometimes unrestrained speculation about "anti-plays" and the like. Kennedy resists this tendency, however, and probes the language of both the plays and the novels with useful attention to recurrent and evolving patterns and to the author's "economy of form that corresponds to an urgency of vision--the chaos of the world mediated by clarity" (22). As genuinely new as Beckett's use of form and language were, they had their roots, and here, too, Kennedy makes the relevant connections, tracing (among other things) the influence of Anglo-Irish culture and of Joyce upon his language, then the Parisian context upon his sense of theatre, and the effect of his experience of Proust upon his sense of vision and form.

As this is a survey text, Kennedy reverses chronology and takes up the plays before the novels, and focuses (chronologically) upon the five major works, each radically innovative, which emerged during the key decades of his artistic career, between 1949 and 1963: *Waiting for Godot (En attendant Godot* was completed in 1949, between the final two-thirds of the novel trilogy), *Endgame*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Happy Days*, and *Play*.

Beckett's--modern theatre's--most famous work has generated one of the larger critical industries (indeed, this book shares the 1989 Cambridge list with Lawrence Graver's work devoted entirely to *Godot* in both of its French and English texts). Kennedy provides some of this background, including a nice list of sweeping, and mutually exclusive, interpretations elicited by the work, for example: "a profoundly anti-Christian play" (Chadwick) and "a Christian play" (Ronald Gray and others); and "a picture of unrelieved blackness" (Wellwarth) and "a modern classic affirming man's dignity and ultimate salvation" (Marinello). His own approach to the work emphasizes the interplay of its waiting-game structure and its vivid and precise theatricality. The careful attention to the actual progression of the work, rather than to the cosmic speculation it inspires, makes the chapter an excellent introduction to the play, but it also serves to launch a thesis about the overall evolution of the major plays that is of considerably more than introductory interest.

He argues that "the plays get nearer to pure theatre, in the sense that they could not function in any other genre or medium." Beckett's repetitive and cyclical structures allow him to explore--and exploit--uncertainty and non-resolution in entirely new ways. Nell and Nag in their dustbins, the immobilized Hamm and the restless Clov, generates a very different, less "active" dynamic from that of *Godot's* foursome; Krapp and his futile monologue/dialogue with his earlier selves (a relationship Kennedy explores somewhat more fully in an essay in Enoch Brater's 1986 anthology, *Beckett at 80/Beckett in Context*, is still more purified of dramatic movement, but the self-doomed Krapp can roam free in comparison with the hapless, if spirited Winnie, buried to her neck in *Happy Days*, of three years later; and two years after that, in *Play*, the characters were reduced to talking heads, three isolated figures in urns, spouting an interwoven tale of adultery, responding like automata to the spotlight.

Kennedy thus pursues Beckett's development of a vision of ever more drastic individual helplessness mirrored in a theatre of ever purer dramatic stasis. His approach to the novels--he focuses upon the trilogy--reveals a similar progression, although neither here not in his treatment of the plays does he impose his template at the expense of his depiction of Beckett's range and diversity. He argues that the movement from *Molloy*, with its language of wandering and quest, to the confined narrator of *Malone Dies*, to the disembodied voice of *The Unnameable*, is actually "something like a pilgrim's regress" (106) carrying the author's preoccupation with the expression of his sense of the diminishment of the individual to ever more radically innovative extremes.

Throughout the book Kennedy offers sufficiently thorough backing for his arguments that he illuminates a great deal in the way of language and structure, even at the occasional moments when the thesis or a particular application thereof is less convincing. He has managed the difficult task of giving the beginner a challenging but comprehensive view of a formidable subject, while at the same time offering even the hardened Beckettian an important argument about the relationship between the art and the vision of humanity that fueled it.

Jonathan Kalb did not set out to write a text with an introductory function, and in fact he presents significant arguments that are inevitably controversial. However, the breadth and detail of his survey of a good-sized sample of those who have devoted themselves to realizing Beckett upon the stage (and screen and radio) give his book enormous value even as an introduction, albeit a special kind of introduction, to his theatre. Kalb takes up the basic question about Beckett's theatre, often asked, but here as phrased by Richard Gilman in a 1961 review of *Happy Days*: "How does it manage to achieve its high intensity and complete conviction--how, really, does it *reach* us--after its apparent abandonment of most of the traditional means of dramatic communication?" He seeks the answer not in the texts themselves, but in their interpretation in a range of specific productions, and in the reflections of the interpreter's themselves.

Kalb's inquiry takes in some seventy productions spanning a decade of the 1970s and 80s, as well as conversations with some of the most significant Beckett actors and directors (Billie Whitelaw, David Warrilow, Alvin Epstein, Ekkehard Schall, Walter Asmus, JoAnne Akalaitis, Klaus Herm, and Frederick Neumann), as well as the man himself. He opens with a striking dissection of one of the most perfectly realized Beckettian moments, Billie Whitelaw's acclaimed *Rockaby*. Combining his observation of her appearance, her gestures, her (taped) sound and rhythms, with her own reflections, and parallel events in other Beckett-Whitelaw productions, he also makes excellent use of Charles Lyons' signal essay on "perceiving" *Rockaby* as text and performance (in *Comparative Drama* 16). The net result is a powerful demonstration of one of his basic contentions, difficult to grasp in its very plainness, and in its superficial similarity to the claims of much contemporary performance art: "His dramas are not *about* experiences; *they are those experiences themselves*" (4).

What Kalb means by this in this particular context becomes clear in his appreciation of those productions in which the experiences portrayed in the texts are most fully and precisely embodied in performance--that is, those productions directed by (or authoritatively overseen by) Beckett himself. The exactitude of Beckett's stage directions and of his standards for their realization is, of course, both legendary and the subject of much controversy (anyone who believes that this is a thing of the past ought to glance at Adrian Brine's "Beckett in Amber," which appeared shortly after its subject's death in *The Quarterly Theatre Review* for the last quarter of 1989.) In his treatment of the processes--including physical techniques, some in the manner of Meyerhold's Biomechanics--by which the greatest Beckett actors prepared themselves to achieve the level of control he demanded, Kalb not only illuminates some vital theatre history, he also offers an eloquent defense of Beckett's precise instructions themselves, and their intrinsic place in the totality of a Beckett performance.

As he applied this contention to diverse *Godots* and *Endgames*, the author makes judgments that are likely to inspire--and deserve--strong resistance. However, the evidence he offers, and his intelligent use thereof, will reward even the most suspicious. For instance, he is a compelling adherent to Beckett's side of the notorious Beckett-Akalaitis feud over her post-nuclear-

holocaust *Endgame* for the ART, but the coverage itself, including his interview with the director, is sufficiently rich to offer important insights on both sides of the controversy.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this book is its author's enduring commitment to his original focus upon the actual experience of Beckett. He extends that concrete sense of the directed, acted, and lived drama to a truly comprehensive range of plays (including efforts to stage the prose) and players. The result of Kalb's delineation of Beckett's uniquely disciplined existential drama will, for many, be the discovery of an artist whose achievement was even larger and more original than they had thought. For others, there will be much to contend with in these pages, but no one who seeks to understand the process and the experience of his art upon the stage can afford to ignore them.

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The Director As Artist, Play Direction Today. By R. H. O'Neill and N.M. Boretz. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1987.

Though perhaps not as gripping a title as the present one, a better title for Professors O'Neill and Boretz's book might have been "The Director as an Artisan." This is by no means a snub, for anyone can talk about the 'art' of direction in vague uncertain terms, but here, these authors have defined a straightforward technique that is concrete, functional and seemingly workable for the variety of students bent upon directing in today's theatre.

Probably, the most difficult job in academic theatre is writing a book about directing. Not only are there as many opinions about what constitutes fine directing as there are directors, but the field of direction itself is still poorly defined and can mean anything from faithfully mounting a playwrights's vision to complete auteur control as practiced by say, Peter Brook or Peter Stein, in which a play is utterly reshaped to have an all new and completely different meaning than perhaps that intended by the original author. R. H. O'Neill's and N. M. Boretz's text copes with these modern complexities by offering a concrete, practical and accessible book, that lingers little on theory and plunges the novice director into the pragmatics.

The benefits of the approach are many. For one thing, the book is fast reading, easy to grasp and well-organized. The opening section describes the visual sense of direction as found in Dean and Carra's classic *Fundamentals of Play Directing*. Throughout, there are clear and lucid diagrams of the prompt book, scenic breakdowns and production notes. While charts, written preparation and pre-formulated ideas won't always create an inspired director, O'Neill and Boretz have wisely decided that a director has to start somewhere and strong preparation is viewed as an ally to inspiration.

The book progresses beyond Dean and Carra and offers a variety of perspectives to the new director. The task is viewed from a literary, theatrical, visual, actorly and design analysis position. The value of this multi-sighted perspective is that it offers the director multiple ways of expressing oneself to

the cast and crew. The authors believe in varied methods of communication, not a single tract, and this adds to the book's value.

A terror of many students (and teachers) attempting the class in directing is a text that offers nothing practical to do. It might have ponderous lecture material but few exercises. That isn't the case here. O'Neill and Boretz have many techniques that teachers can impart to students, building blocks in facilitating their directing work. One such idea involves better communication with designers. Many directors master drawing to communicate with the design team, but O'Neill and Boretz offer an approach for the director that doesn't know an exacto from a crayon, the narrative. "Some directors write narratives for designers describing what they see or what experience they want the audience to have in sets, costumes, lighting, and special properties" (177). The idea is to express in words the pictures of the event the director has locked in his or her mind. There is also a strong functional analysis form for both scenes and entire plays (similar to that used by Francis Hodge) which starts the young director off with a good understanding of the whole work.

Another special element worthy of mention is the problem/solution sections that are integrated into each chapter. As in Robert Wills' *Directing for the Theatre*, O'Neill and Boretz have incorporated mini-case studies of actual problems that a director might encounter into each chapter. These problem/solution segments are conveniently referenced in their own table of contents so they can be consulted quickly if a director is having a similar problem. In one segment, the authors discuss a director confronted with a production of a classic, *The Clouds*. The audience, the theatre's reputation and the climate of experimentation demands a radical treatment. O'Neill/Boretz suggest an updated version. Lots of academics might quibble with such advice, but the nature of these problem/solution sections is to offer open-ended solutions, not text book truisms. This serves students who might be seeking permission to apply radical solutions, an invitation to innovate.

Though the authors cannot know the reader's current level of expertise, the book demands expert preparation before production which should make any new director feel confident entering the production process.

Practical exercises abound, like the planning of a rehearsal and technical schedule. But, for many, the real test of a director is the ability to obtain crisp and pointed performances from the ensemble. The approach to acting is direct, four points. The authors work on functional areas of agreement between a director and actor. For the director's purposes, the actor needs an action, objective, obstacle and an inner image (to motivate the action). These elements aid both the director and actor in building each actor's personal score. It demands that the actor and director work to the same purpose. Diagrams give example of actors' scores compiled with the help of the director. Nothing is indefinite. Actor moments are transcribed in written form with each beat defined by objectives, actions, images and obstacles. The sense of "scoring" is quite literal. There is even an example of an acting 'score' for a song from a musical.

While some might balk at this firm approach, the need to frame art in explicit terms doesn't necessarily limit its goals. By solidifying the actors' thoughts, O'Neill/Boretz apparently hope to help actors generate more ideas.

Wisely, the book does not dwell on theoretical discussions of acting technique, it simply would serve no purpose.

But, there is a subconscious dimension to this actor work when O'Neill discusses the use of inner images, something she defines as "the unconscious, automatic, mental pictures we attach to words, thoughts or feelings" (233). By making students aware of these subconscious tools, they can enhance their performance capabilities. O'Neill suggests that use of images isn't just an idle idea, but the means to making rehearsals dynamic. It is claimed that the use of such images could help relate the actor to the text, external elements in the environment, subtextual foci, and emotional memory. It sound like these inner images would be a great focus for practical workshops to support the text.

Probably the aspect most neglected in the directorial equation is the use and or abuse of the audience. O'Neill and Boretz have crafted an audience analysis form that makes the director think about the impact of the production on the audience. They suggest an expectation score like the acting score for the director to plan the possible emotional response of the audience for each beat.

With its strong organization, specific examples, problem/solution sections, clear figures and charts, O'Neill and Boretz have written a functional book that is useful to the director in planning the production, considerate of the audience, filled with the necessary directorial homework, and direct in its method of dealing with actor problems. A welcome addition to a field rarely understood and rarely rendered lucidly as a craft.

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Cast of One. By John S. Gentile. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

John S. Gentile's *Cast of One* makes the reader aware that solo performance is not only a traditional art form but an innovative one as well. Though its history is long, few people know how to classify it. Solo performance has been called lecture, chautauqua, one-person production, performance art and happening, but each time it arises, people look upon it as a new art just discovered. It constantly changes to suit the performer, the style of the era or a particular purpose.

Gentile's ambitious book is a wholistic view of solo performance art from Dickens to Spaulding Gray sheltered under the umbrella term of "one-person shows." The work serves as an introductory critical study, history and contemporary examination of the style. It is a long-awaited work for a field that has only recently become the subject of scholarly interest.

He begins with definition sorting the elements of vaudeville, performance art, recitation, lecture, and autobiography that evolved into solo performance, and he creates a chronology that incorporates the most important performers and shows from the nineteenth century to the present day. The terms performer and show are simultaneous, for regardless of directors' and writers' involvement, it is the performer's embodiment of the material that determines the form.

The book dispels popular prejudices that auto-performance, cabaret, monologue and performance art (a) are fads, (b) are popularizations of trivialities, (c) only recited history, (d) inherently inferior to plays with multiple actors, (e) or egotistical performance pieces used only as star vehicles.

Linking solo performance to post-modernism, he sees it as a natural progression away from the spectacular and epic toward the personal and minimal. It isn't just a more modest performance option, in many ways it is greater, the whole of literature and history become the material for a production, and the varied works of soloists reveal the minds of their creators.

Gentile starts his history with the remarkable achievement of Charles Dickens who probably did more to obscure the line between reading literature and actually performing it than any solo performer before him. Dickens' reading tours were a ferocious assault of literary and actorly work that Dickens undertook on many occasions, partly for the money and partly for the thrill of live audiences. Gentile reports that many scholars believe these exhausting tours contributed to Dickens' premature death at the age of fifty-eight. But Dickens' love of the stage and his energetic entertainments came to be regarded as something of an alternative drama in an age where the legitimate theatre suffered from a poverty of scripts. In Gentile's book, this is the start of solo performance.

One of the reasons for the early success of the form was that it offered older actors an opportunity to perform when they could not endure the physical rigors of a fully staged performance. Actresses Fanny Kemble and Charlotte Cushman turned to the form in later years. Another reason for readings was to make sure justice was done to one's own literary works. Poets sought to give their poems the right resonance, and authors like Dickens and Poe sought the mantle of respectability and literary seriousness as much as the substantial monetary gain involved in the venture.

A point that Gentile makes throughout the book is that solo performance, though successful for both sexes, has always been a liberating arena for women performers, and it has continued to be a means for female artists to gain artistic power in the theatre.

Also, Gentile wisely shows the intersection of art and commerce in the creation of James Redpath's Lyceum Bureau, the first speaker's bureau which Redpath called, "a general headquarters, a bureau for the welcome of literary men and women coming to our country for the purpose of lecturing" (18). How does the formation of a speaker's bureau help to create a dramatic genre? It helps to understand the schizophrenic Victorian mind. The Victorians morally abhorred the theatre which in both Europe and America had the unsavory reputation as a place of thieves and prostitutes. But along with the mistrust of theatre came a corresponding veneration for literature. Family evenings of readings were common place and acceptable. The reading form therefore became a morally approved alternative to the wicked stage, so the drama indirectly benefited from the lecture circuit.

But mere readings of books were not the only goals of 19th century performers. Gentile credits Mark Twain with creating the persona of a character, the backwoods humorist. It was not a form easy to master. "I never

tried reading as a trade and I wanted to try it . . . it was ghastly," (36) said Twain.

What is remarkable about Gentile's book is that it shows the business logic of the one person show corresponding to the artistic growth of the form. In a sense, business nurtured the style. Another American innovation came in the form of the chautauqua. The originators of the first Chautauqua according to Gentile were John Vincent and Lewis Miller, two innovators who hoped to bring education and culture to the masses during the long summer months by having tent meetings where speakers would lecture and people could commune with nature as they communed with the poets. Overt theatricality wasn't allowed (the residual influence of Victorianism) but the "restrained readings of literature" (40) focused attention on individual performers who enlivened the prose with their own special forms of acting. Gentile picks out names of performers that have been all but forgotten in the creation of the solo style. For example, Helen Potter was an important entertainer who did impressions of actors and lecturers. But while elements of variety entered the chautauqua, there was none of the slapstick, sexual farce or song and dance that characterized that less educational form of theatrical performance, the vaudeville.

Gentile clearly shows that this history is not a straightforward path directly to performance art. That would have been too easy. His book explains how the thread of solo performance was almost lost at the turn of the century. He points to a number of factors: failure of agrarian rural economies, lower quality shows, overt populism degrading serious literature, and the influence of more immediate media such as film, radio and newspapers.

Still, someone always seemed to choose the solo route, often times for money, which served to keep the style open as an option. A prominent proponent was Charles Laughton who sought the refuge of solo performance when he was offered inferior scripts. Gentile's description of Laughton's persona, his study of the genre and its history, his gestures, expressions, even the way he carried piles of books into the show are insightful.

In the period women such as Ruth Draper and particularly Cornelia Otis Skinner made major contributions. In her *Paris '90*, Skinner presented a fully mounted panorama of an era that "consisted of fifteen theatrically linked monologues, each presenting either historical or fictious women of Paris in 1890."

By the 50s, theatre and solo performance were simultaneously uniting and separating. Gentile cites the influence of Emlyn Williams' Dickens production and Hal Holbrook's *Mark Twain Tonight* as the breakthrough events. Holbrook sought to do a complete replication of Twain and his style. The production was totally mounted theatre, but also an opportunity for an individual performer's unique expression. His make-up took three hours to apply. He adapted Twain's literature to suit the show, and he found ways to place the character in the context of the scene for the performance. First he would select a character: Huck, Jim, or the River Pilot. "Once I feel I have conceived one of these characters properly I do him again and think Mark Twain. The voice quality immediately changes when I do that and the physical movements acquire a different pace and quality" (128).

Gentile notes the current popularity of biographical performance in one person plays such as : *Give 'Em Hell, Harry!, Oscar Wilde: Diversions and Delights,* and *The Hitler Masque*. But his is cautious in pointing out that one person biographical monodramas are only part of the larger framework of solo performance. He explains that the purposes of modern performers can be multiple. To imitate, to entertain, or to impersonate.

But theatre and performance have also split going in separate directions. Gentile describes examples of this movement. He gives Spaulding Gray's *Swimming to Cambodia* as an example of new performance that uses autobiography and the author/actor's persona as a means to create character and form. In performer Quentin Crisp's *An Evening with Quentin Crisp* the line between character and autobiography practically disappears. Crisp created a flamboyant personality in response to public repression of his homosexuality, and his early shows were literally conversations with Crisp, nothing was prepared.

Yet more traditional performers such as John Gielgud and Ian McKellen have had great success in productions of Shakespeare pieces, almost returning to the Dickenseque roots of the genre.

He describes some recent successes, Whoopi Goldberg, Lily Tomlin and Eric Bogosian as performers on the edge. Goldberg with her engaging impersonations, and Tomlin with her *Search for Intelligent Life in the Universe* with its "highlight of the play; a compressed history of the feminist movement" (170). Bogosian he sees as a performer living on the dangerous edge presenting an audience with hard truths that are unflattering and sometimes revolting as in his performance, *Drinking in America*.

Gentile's book is thoroughly engaging at all times, but he is especially lucid in his discussion of the influences on the creation of postmodern solo performance. He argues that current soloists are still reacting to the 19th century Victorian stage and are seeking to transform the representational stage into the presentational one, thus making it the norm. Clearly, the influence of television which has made the "talking head" the medium of the performer and has reduced the scale and expectations of public performance has had some impact. He explains how the one person show has allowed some performers freedom and artistic control that might have been denied them through traditional stage outlets. He brings up the frightening and real possibility that biographical one-person shows might lose their popularity due to the deficiencies of an educational system that now leaves most adults with no common cultural ground.

Gentile's book also uncovers the remarkable fixation of American audiences with the cult of personality, our love of celebrity. There is a clear psychological rapport with the solo performer who immediately becomes a star in the eyes of the audience. The actor and the audience are mutually gratified, the performer by having achieved celebrity, the audience by having created one.

Though Gentile suggests the form could expand since the economics of solo performance are usually more marketable than a full cast show, he does discuss the dangers of freedom creating overindulgence where performance becomes mere masturbation. The book fills a gap in theatre history that has

rarely been studied in a scholarly manner. Aside from an engaging reading style and a massive (over 25 pages) bibliography, Gentile's book is a comprehensive introduction to a relatively new genre. Given the recent controversy over NEA arts funding, the book may soon require a revision with information on Karen Finley, Bill Irwin and other performers.

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Virtual Theatre. By Evlyn Gould. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989.

Last year while working on a production of an ancient Greek play, I met a classics professor who was working on a new translation of another ancient Greek play. When I innocently asked him, "who's producing it?," his face turned ashen. In a mixture of horror and disbelief he retorted, "no one's 'producing' it. This is a reading version!"

I was as stunned as he. In my production-oriented mentality, I couldn't imagine why anyone would bother to write a play that wasn't going to be produced. But after reading Evlyn Gould's *Virtual Theatre* I now understand the myriad uses such plays perform. Gould's book explains the importance of "virtual plays," a genre which she defines as "a purely theoretical history constituted through the specific examples of 'writerly' or 'ideal' plays" (2). As she explains in specific, philosophical terms, virtual plays are ensnared between actual performance, the philosophic dialogues of Plato, the romantics' conception of an ideal theatre and the realm of the Freudian subconscious.

Gould makes clear her analysis of the field is not exhaustive and that there are many forms of virtual plays yet to be explored. Here, she limits her study to a group of plays that fall roughly into the Romantic period, that era of artistic rebellion which was infatuated with the idea of theatre but rarely found a suitable vehicle for performing it save through the intellectually trivial but popular convention of melodrama. The very aspects of the movement: charged rhetoric, discomfort with conventions, attacks on social injustice, and a general angst with the complacent status quo made it ill-suited to the stage, that most reactionary art. The writers of these plays are often poets or philosophers and each seemed to have a love/hate relationship with the drama. Though they abhorred the theatre's live performance they found value in the form of the dialogue, to some the model of the platonic dialogue was seen as the ideal method of imparting philosophical truth. A trifle ironic in that Plato mistrusted the theatre and its deceptive poetic muse.

Gould's history describes these writers of ideal plays, among them Plato, Diderot, Hugo, Vigny, Stendhal, Flaubert and Mallarme as stylists, thinkers, dreamers and partially philosophers. It is significant that many of these plays are sketches, unfinished or rewritten works that owe their twilight existence on the periphery of drama to the fact that they never achieved finished form. But Gould makes a compelling case that whether finished or left unfinished these works serve a higher function than just performance. They are tracts, guideposts, psycho-consciousness maps, and codices to thinking. They are not

mere entertainments, although none lack for imaginative power and scope. In their virtual states they exist as literature, poetry, philosophy and particularly in the works of Hugo as a bridge to the spirit world.

Certainly the work of Hugo is possibly the most intriguing. Hugo, the titanic intellect of the Romantics, was forced to an ideal drama by his disillusionment with the commercial stage. He begins by creating theatre pieces in his journals but eventually he devotes time to an unfinished work, "The Theatre en Liberte" which offers strange metaphysical means to composition. Gould's superb scholarship describes Hugo's "dialogues with the tables," seances that invoked the spirits of famous authors and transcribed their new works from the realm of the dead. One of these visitations resulted in "le Prologue Mystique" in which Hugo was reported to have been visited by Shakespeare who gifted him with an opus from beyond. The piece, described as a "drama of the universe" studies and attempts to resolve cosmic issues. Hugo crafts a philosophical system by means of this theatre. Gould explains it in terms of romantic qualities "that no matter how hard one tries to look at the world and describe it, one cannot escape the purely illusory perceptions of one's own fantasies" (83).

Hugo isn't alone in his ambition to make philosophy through drama. In fact, Gould uncovers the Romantics' collective motive: a dissatisfaction with this world, a need to create an ideal world, and a vehicle for expressing a subjective view of the world.

Gould works forward and backward in time showing connections between the virtual play and ancient philosophy as well as more contemporary Freudian and postmodern theories. She traces the origins of the form to Diderot. Diderot's generation read Plato not only as a model for philosophical discourse (the dialogue) but also as an internalized theatre of the mind in which the overt conflict was not neatly resolved in a clear ending but left open to investigate thought through the model of the discussion, a continuing conversation on an issue. This Gould describes as similar to Michel Foucault's description of a dialogue as a "theatrum philosophicum."

Diderot embarks on *Le Neveu de Rameau*, where the author is at once the actor and the spectator. Gould shows this duality to be something quite modern and unique. She describes the similarity between *Rameau* and Diderot's "Paradox of the Actor" where Diderot discusses the actor's ability to evoke emotions while remaining firmly in control of his emotional generating mechanism. The narrator/character of the drama is at once outside of it and inside of it, confined and freed. Diderot's identification with his drama is strong. He notes, "in my case, my thoughts are my wenches" (21). The art of *Rameau* is explored and Gould concludes that role-playing has a theatrical and philosophical message, that "to create art is to 'unknow' oneself and in a Platonic sense, to become a-moral, since it involves losing one's sense of self as a unique identity in the creation of multiplied self-representations" (29). Diderot is than creating a framework for Romantic, subjective speculation. The essence is that a system of philosophy emerges in musical terms. Rameau takes a fugal journey. The 'play' then "emphasizes its displacement of an act of communication in favor of a language performance by drawing a relationship between the movement of thought and the movement of music" (34).

Gould calls it a "genre-that-is-not-one" (35). The play is philosophy, a romantic striving to be both the vehicle of communication (music) and the communication (literature) all at once.

Yet the romantics' rationale to go to such complicated lengths to make philosophical plays rather than actual plays seems elusive. Gould tries to assess the Romantic theatre experiment and comes up with a variety of theories. Perhaps the Romantics were writing bookish plays to avoid the harsh grasp of censors who considered their plays obscene. Perhaps they didn't want to recreate the world through drama but were trying to conjure their own alternate reality through it. Or maybe they simply felt that the medium of theatre wasn't the appropriate expression, that some new technology such as cinema would arrive to carry the new art form forward.

Another question concerns the efficacy of creating such a body of work. What's the point of non-actable plays? Gould uncovers various uses. Stendhal writes *Racine et Shakespeare* as a romantic attack on neo-classicism. He argues that great drama gives moments of perfect illusion, that the romantic artist makes his own rules, and that great art isn't blockaded by the dim set of precepts: time, concentration, action, and poetry which govern the neo-classical work.

Alfred de Vigny argued (much as did Edward Gordon Craig) that the play actor gets in the way of the poet artist of the stage. His *Daphne* (unfinished) and *Julien* were unproduceable violating the strict censorship standards of his era. His outlet? The ideal play on the page and recreated in the mind of the reader.

Perhaps Gould summarizes the impetus driving the divergent spirits that make up the virtual theatre 'movement' best by describing Hugo's shift "from a presentation whose goal was to enlighten society to a presentation of one individual's mind which seeks only to reflect the thoughts of one subject" (79).

Virtual theatre also suggests to Gould a bridge from Platonic idealism, a theatre out there to a theatre of the subconscious, the playground of Freudian psychoanalysis. Gould describes the virtual play's resistance to mounting. She speaks of Flaubert's *The Temptation of St. Anthony* with its verbal scenery. The figure of Anthony she describes as a blank, a negative that absorbs identity. The play itself is an account of psychoanalytic motives: desires, repressed sex drives, dream states, fantasy confusions with reality, a primal study of psychopathology.

Remarkably the book makes the case that these virtual plays (by no means exhausted in this study) provide a curious balance point between the philosophy of Plato and the work of Freud. Flaubert introduces a narrator who appears to stand outside the play novelistically seeing everything. There is no fourth wall. As she says, the script becomes "a play . . . about nothing but its own mechanics" (129). In this way, Gould illustrates the link between the virtual play and it's technique and the postmodern work which is perhaps more overtly dependent on philosophy and interpretation than on actual performance. As the character of Anthony progresses, Gould explains that the psyche neither changes or evolves. There are just continual multiplications and repetitions foreshadowing the symbolists and their static drama of imagistic beauty yet devoid of progressive plot.

Finally, in Steven Mallarme's *The Afternoon of a Faun*, Gould describes the victory of the virtual style when Mallarme constructs a drama that is "an imaginary spectacle of subjectivity in which the subject is constituted as a collection of theatrical positions" (164). Acts of abandon, rape and fantasy predate Freud's plumbing of unconscious desires by psychoanalysis. How does the receptor experience this "ideal book" of Mallarme's? Gould argues that the choreographic riff of this poetry is continually revivified by successive readers who enter into the world of Mallarme's fantasy as a personal improvisation. Each recreates the fantasy in the mind. His virtual plays seek to "re-present and re-evoke the functioning of the fantasm" (177) in the minds of those who join his fantasy.

Besides a long overdue reinvestigation of Romantic drama, Gould's book unlocks useful ways of viewing virtual plays that have had a begrudged, conditional or peripheral existence. The text is excellent source reading for postmodern directors who seek to discover the virtual aspects, the ideal forms of their productions, those dreams that mass audiences never see.

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Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?: Necessary Fictions, Terrifying Realities. By Matthew Roudane. Twayne's Masterwork Studies, G.K. Hall & Co. 1990.

Matthew Roudane's newest critical volume, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?: Necessary Fictions, Terrifying Realities*, is far from basic script analysis. This many-faceted study in G. K. Hall's acclaimed Twayne Series takes the measure of Edward Albee's wit and brilliance.

Like Roudane's *Understanding Edward Albee* (1987), this more concentrated examination of Albee's early masterpiece will charm both popular and academic audiences by reason of Roudane's wit and style. By the close of his study, we grasp who Albee really is, feel his fervid need to revive an American theatre he found comatose at the start of his career, and we acknowledge his gift to theatre worldwide.

Roudane places Albee historically as one who recouped an American dramatic heritage that had been molded by O'Neill but almost lost for a while in a bleak decline of drama in the 1960s. Albee's "qualitative voice emerged" when Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller's contributions to O'Neill's legacy were spotty. Roudane deems it lucky that Albee was out of kilter with Americans of the period and with their lazy complaisance and optimism, and credits the dramatist with lodging "a dissenting vote of tremendous theatrical power." Early on, Roudane surmises, Albee learned that violent and confrontational theatre has a civilizing function and can structure and order our minds, and he thrust non-traditional theatre at the frivolous audiences of Broadway where ethically unimportant drama had reigned.

Surely the most engaging section of Roudane's study is that which uncovers thematic affinities in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and *To a Lighthouse*, a major work of writer Virginia Woolf. Despite differences in their language, style, and psychology, Roudane finds Woolf and Albee attentive

to the impending decline of civilization and to the dearth of security in life's "startling, unexpected, and unknown." Roudane notes indisputably that both authors' works close their covers on characters questioning the *why* of fear. Appropriately Roudane quotes Albee on the play's title: ". . . of course, who's afraid of Virginia Woolf means who's afraid of the *big bad* wolf . . . who's afraid of living life without false illusions[?]" Roudane sees hope in Albee's denouement that George and Martha, *aware* of their fear, can break psychological crutches which Virginia Woolf clutched to the end.

In another section of Roudane's study of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Albee himself, as well as others, may widen eyes a bit at nuances of Roudane's reading of character. Those who consider George and Martha sane though racked to the limits of living will not fancy Roudane's recurrent reference to Martha as mad, "beyond the borders of sense . . . her rational faculties overridden . . . having crossed the imaginary threshold to the deranged." Might Roudane agree a little too literally with George's overstated tirade at Martha? He supplies small support from other critics or from the playwright. Most of us take more figuratively George's exorcism of a demon in Martha! And whether Albee's oft-stated penchant for treating characters who are out of kilter truly implies a bent for forming them insane is *if-fy*. Nonetheless, Roudane argues that the play's dialogue and physical setting only mask the pathology and madness of Martha.

At one ticklish spot--the couple's child-myth--it may be objected that Roudane overplays what he calls Martha's psychological hemorrhaging. In a recent study, "A British Parallel for Edward Albee's Made-up Child," in Philip Kolin's journal, *Studies in American Drama* [1988], a total contrast appears between Albee's Martha and the demented heroine of a short story of the same year, 1962, a childless woman who with great love and labor knits sweaters for her made-up son. Albee makes Martha conscious that the son exists only in her imagination despite her and George's fanciful description of the boy; hence neither George nor Martha is totally psychotic. We must accept the two as normal human beings no matter how far-fetched their games of communication may seem. Eminent directors and critics, among them Alan Schneider and Anne Paolucci, hold that Albee's omission of children's toys or apparel from his staging instructions attests to his intent that George and Martha are sane, though out of kilter. Theirs is a conjugal game, not a flight from sanity.

Despite this fussy nuance in Roudane's reading of Martha, his resourceful analysis of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is soundly based and bolstered with the keenness of thought he acknowledges in celebrated critical works by C.W.E. Bigsby, Gilbert Debusscher, Anne Paolucci, and Ruby Cohn, and in collected essays on Albee edited by Philip C. Kolin and J. Madison Davis. Roudane's fresh and coherent chronicling of this material is a boon to scholars. First, he solidly locates his own reading of the play's "philosophical landscaping," of its author's moral and aesthetic absorptions; then he quotes amply from eminent Albee-scholars in support or rebuttal of his views; and finally, most interestingly of all, follows up by quoting the playwright himself. These pertinent and fascinating Albee statements come from Roudane's own

interviews with the playwright and from Philip C. Kolin's *Conversations with Edward Albee*.

For example, in one segment of his study, Roudane defines George and Martha's game-playing as affirmative--a struggle with their souls until illusion ends and perception begins. Next, Roudane relates an opposing view by the eminent Gilbert Debusscher, who has pronounced the games pessimistic and nihilistic, though the play is technically sound. Finally, to reinforce his affirmative view of the play's ambiance, Roudane quotes the playwright's own summation on the purgative influence of confrontation: "George and Martha cut away through all nonsense to try to make a relationship based on absolute reality. Strikes me as being a fairly affirmative conclusion to apply."

Roudane's precise and invaluable scholarship continues throughout his volume, particularly in one ancillary feature--a current and annotated bibliography of books, chapters of books, and essays on Albee, witnessing to the dramatist's continuing stature here and abroad. Roudane's engaging analysis should stand his volume tall and front-row-center on shelves of both private and public libraries.

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