

king': Ford's *Perkin Warbeck* and the Stuart history play," "Oxymoron and the structure of Ford's *The Broken Heart*," "Shakespeare and Jonson," "London comedy and the ethos of the city," "Comic London," and "Parks and Ardens."

Given the fact that the majority of these essays have been published (and commented upon) for some time—the median publication date is 1980—it is perhaps most appropriate to concentrate here on the two previously unpublished articles. "'Wrying but a little' . . .," one of the new works, opens the book. Originally presented at the International Shakespeare Conference in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1992, this paper pre-supposes more knowledge than a typical reader is likely to have and often gets numbingly bogged down in recitation of factual material. Nevertheless, what emerges from the discussion is an important insight into the nature of sex and marriage in Elizabethan and Jacobean society: and, by extension, the way such matters impact upon the drama. Most interesting is the delineation of differences between civil and canonical law, thus simultaneously explaining and enriching contract scenes from plays such as *Cymbeline*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The other previously unpublished essay is "Comic London," in which Barton argues that "Comic London is a city experienced both indoors and out, in public places like St. Paul's or the Royal Exchange, but also in particular districts within and beyond the walls, in the rough and tumble of taverns actually frequented by members of the audience, and in the intimacy of private houses standing in named, familiar streets" (338). The essay starts slowly, with an over-long (and not entirely accurate) exegesis on Aristophanes, but ultimately succeeds in demonstrating that Renaissance English dramaturgy was the first to use both interior and exterior settings of specific urban locales. The extent to which this new form represents simply a blending of classical and medieval sources (like much of the rest of English Renaissance theatre and drama) is not really examined, but the significance of the change is ably and thoroughly explicated.

Barton is demonstrably most in her element when discussing the nature of language in given works, but she is also remarkably adept at linking ideas: reading drama through history, Shakespeare through other playwrights, etc. On the other hand, the essays also show that Barton, over time, begins writing for an increasingly elite audience: the essays of the early- and mid-1970s ("Shakespeare and the limits of language," "The king disguised . . .," etc.) are no less scholarly but far more accessible than the more recent works. The essays from the 1990s are still cogent, still readable, but the whirlwind of data that surrounds much of this work tends rather to dazzle than to elucidate. For years, Anne Barton has provided valuable insights into Shakespeare and his world, and has been especially successful in bringing Shakespeare to a wider audience through her

introductions in both the New Pelican Shakespeare and the Riverside Shakespeare. It is a pity that she and her editors saw fit to construct this book in such a way as to be most valuable to people who need it least.

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TEXAS STUDIES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

Editor: Tony C. Hilfer
University of Texas at Austin

Texas Studies in Literature and Language congratulates Dennis Todd for his brilliant Summer 1992 essay, "The Hairy Maid at the Harpsichord: Some Speculations on the Meaning of *Gulliver's Travels*" which won the **American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies Clifford Prize** for the best eighteenth century article of 1992.

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- Stephen Shelburne on the epistolary ethos of eighteenth century satire
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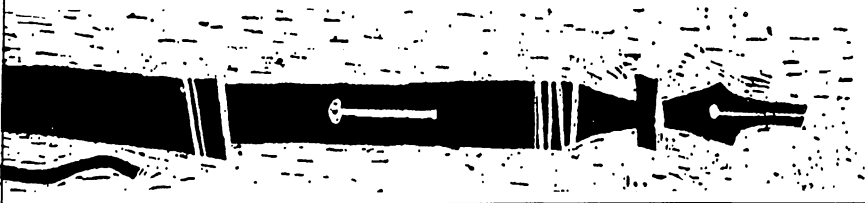
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Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines & Female Pages. By Michael Shapiro. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.

Recent critical and theoretical initiatives have claimed profound implications for crossgendered representation. Typical of these claims have been Marjorie Garber's suggestion that crossgendered representation tests the limits of theatrical representation itself, Jill Dolan's critique of male drag performance as perniciously affirmative of women's socially constructed roles, and Laura Levine's discovery of the fear of effeminization at the core of 16th and 17th century anti-theatricality. This book by Michael Shapiro about the motif of the boy heroine in male disguise is a significant contribution to this rapidly expanding body of work, in part because Shapiro productively frames his subject in terms of the issues of spectatorship that arise from the tendency of the early modern theater to expose its own performativity. What Shapiro characterizes as "the play-boy's dexterous articulation of layered sexual identities" (143) emerges here as one of the ways in which the theater has explored the unstable boundary between the world of performance and the world of the audience.

In his first three chapters, Shapiro considers the social and cultural contexts within which the motif of the boy heroine in male disguise received extensive development in some eighty plays over the span of seven decades. While acknowledging his debt to cultural materialism, Shapiro contends that there are limits to what we can intuit about the specific "anxieties and current conflicts over gender roles" that are enacted by the female page (61). His attention is focused instead on a complex of "literary and social resonances" that informed both the text and its audience, thereby generating a "dense network of possible responses, creating a rich field of possibilities for play" (62). In addition to the stage convention of the representation of women by boys and the romance convention of women disguising as themselves as men, Shapiro identifies the confrontational *Hic Mulier* movement of the 1610s and the frequent punishment of cross-dressed women as prostitutes among the factors that contributed to this complex of resonances. What is refreshing here is Shapiro's willingness to give this particular theatrical phenomenon an extensive examination in its cultural context, without disallowing complexity for the sake of generalized conclusions about early modern culture.

The five chapters that make up the latter half of *Gender in Play* are each organized around Shapiro's consideration of one of the plays in which Shakespeare employs the disguised heroine motif. As it evolves, this discussion give us a sense of the development of the motif from Julia's empowered smart-aleck in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* to *Cymbeline*, in which the cross-dressed Imogen (like Eurymine in *The Maid's Metamorphosis*) is diminished and marginalized by "her own fear of shame" (174). The common thread in these chapters is the "illusion of depth" (70) that is created by the play-boy's skilled

negotiation of layered gender identities—which, in turn, endows the character with enhanced theatrical power. Based on recent work by Judd Hubert and others, we might be tempted to go a step further and arrive at the notion that this enhancement of theatrical power results because the play-boy (with equal skill) undermines the mimetic credibility of his own representations. Although these latter chapters would effectively seem to establish a foundation for such a conclusion, Shapiro seems a bit too closely wedded to the notion that Shakespeare's audience accepted his staged female characters as "mimetic illusions" (93) to commit himself to such an absolute linkage between the theatrical power of a crossgendered representation and the degree to which its mimetic credibility has been strategically compromised.

What is at issue here, of course, is the audience's perception of the multi-layered, constructed character—as well as the extent to which the audience's perception actually constitutes its complicity in the construction of that character. The difficulties of this problem are evident when we compare Shapiro's readings of Rosalind, who succeeds in his view as "an amalgam constructed of multiple and discrete layers of identity represent[ing] a unified character" (126) and Viola, who leads him to conclude that "the complex figure of male actor/female character/male disguise did not fuse into a single androgynous entity" (144). These two conclusions are not as self-cancelling as they might initially appear to be; they rather serve to define the challenging parameters of the "field of play" to which Shapiro alluded earlier.

At the same time, it must be said that Shapiro is not entirely convincing in his treatment of spectatorship. For while he acknowledges the audience's "complicity in games of illusion-making" (62), he often seems to abandon these collective and collaborative qualities in favor of a model of the audience that stresses the autonomy of each spectator's individual response, as it is governed by "their own personal histories" (144). This has the effect of compromising the coherent sense of cultural context that informed the first section of the book, quite apart from the fact that it appears to impose on 16th and 17th century theater-goers a bourgeois sense of social autonomy that may be more a construction of post-industrial culture. For if (as Shapiro earlier contends) the play-text is to be considered as a material cultural artifact, then the audience's response—particularly in terms of its collaborative potential—must be viewed more consistently as a product of cultural forces that are fundamentally collective in nature.

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After Brecht: British Epic Theatre. Janelle Reinelt. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994.

In some books, the voice of the author disarms us. This is uncommon in contemporary criticism, but is certainly the case in *After Brecht*. From the first gracious and unassuming words of acknowledgement to the final, hopefilled toast to Brechtian dramaturgy, Reinelt has written a volume that holds the reader by its good will and enthusiasm for its subject. The book is a heartfelt tribute to contemporary British political theatre, with thoughtful appreciations of Howard Brenton, Edward Bond, Caryl Churchill, David Hare, Trevor Griffiths and John McGrath. There is an enthusiasm for the work of these playwrights, and fond evocations of experiences in the theatre, such as the New York production of *Plenty* and the Paris premiere of *In the Company of Men*. There is a thoughtful and generous interaction with other theatre critics; even when Reinelt disagrees with her colleagues, she acknowledges their intelligence. The result is a rare pleasure—a critical volume without ego, rancor, defensiveness, self-promotion or self-aggrandizing obscurity.

After Brecht is organized in a series of six, loosely linked chapters, each on a separate dramatist, which is flanked by a brief introduction and minuscule conclusion. Each chapter is arranged in chronological order, focusing on two or three plays by each dramatist. Although she justifies her selection as "defining the practical political theatre from 1960 to 1990" (16), she actually ignores the 60s; the earliest play she treats in any detail is Trevor Griffiths' *Occupations* (1970) and more than half of the plays analyzed were written after 1980. Even Edward Bond, whose plays go back to 1962, is represented by two relatively recent works, *The War Plays* (1985) and *In the Company of Men* (1990). What emerges from these selections, then, is not a history of Brechtian influences on British dramaturgy, nor a study of the development of British political drama from the 1960s to the present, but a highly specific analysis of how Brecht's legacy has influenced certain British socialist dramatists in the years since 1968.

In this book, Brecht's legacy is not a body of plays. There are surprisingly few references to specific works by Brecht, and no attempts are made to establish intertextual relationships between Brecht and these British dramatists. Rather, the legacy is made up of three dramaturgical concepts that produce *Verfremdungseffekt* when used in combination—*gestus*, epic structure, and historicization (8). Although Reinelt refers in her first chapter to some of the means by which Brechtian theory and practice were transmitted to the British theatre—most notably the 1956 and 1965 visits of the Berliner Ensemble to London, and the work of William Gaskill—*After Brecht* is ultimately not a study in reception. Instead of charting the specific reception of particular Brechtian texts on the work of these playwrights, Reinelt posits a general working environment that has been imbued with techniques and values promulgated by Brecht. When Caryl

Churchill observes, "I think for writers, directors and actors working in England in the seventies his ideas have been absorbed into the general pool of shared knowledge and attitudes, so that without constantly thinking of Brecht we nevertheless imagine things in a way we might not have without him" (86), she articulates the idea of influence that dominates the Reinelt's book.

Such a loosely defined notion of Brechtian influence has its merits; it does not agonize over the minutiae of translations, publications, theatrical reviews and production analyses, and results in a straightforward and immensely readable volume. It runs the risk, however, of seriously oversimplifying both Brecht in particular and the process of reception in general. *After Brecht* gives the impression that Brecht can easily be reduced to a small, coherent set of unchanging techniques, and never discusses what parts of his legacy may have been ignored, oversimplified or distorted in the process of reception. Making no differentiation between the author of *Baal* and *The Measures Taken*, or between the theoretician and the practitioner, the Brecht who emerges is consistent, unambiguous, and far simpler than any of the British playwrights treated in the volume. Similarly, British reception of Brecht is made smooth and consistent. Reinelt is frankly puzzled by Martin Esslin's 1969 statement that the British "basically missed Brecht" (7), ignores Peter Brook's comment in his 1968 *The Empty Space* that most Brechtian productions besides the Berliner Ensemble's are fairly lifeless and deadly, passes over the Royal Shakespeare Company's decision to stage Günter Grass' *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising*, with its criticism of Brecht, and misses the opportunity to discuss Christopher Hampton's acidly amusing portrait of Brecht in *Tales from Hollywood*. In short, a major study of Brecht's reception in Britain remains to be written. *After Brecht* helps to document the least problematic part of this complex story.

Furthermore, Reinelt's model of Brecht reception raises questions about what constitutes Brechtian dramaturgy. She never deeply engages the argument, best advanced by Loren Kruger, that devices derived (in part) from Brecht are not in themselves enough to insure a critical effect. Reinelt tries to keep Brechtian devices connected to Brechtian social analysis through an emphasis on historicization as the most crucial of the trio of Brechtian devices, but it sometimes becomes unclear what philosophy of history is being invoked. For example, although Reinelt analyzes *Mad Forest* as epic theatre, Churchill's obfuscation of the power relationships that give rise to the revolution, her use of mythic figures (such as the vampire) to imply some transhistorical essence to history of Romania, and her refusal to ground historical events in the means of production, all combine to give *Mad Forest* a view of history very different from Brecht's Marxian approach. Indeed, in a recent essay in the pages of this journal (Fall/Winter, 1994), Donna Soto-Morettini has persuasively argued that the play's politics may ultimately be more cynical than Brechtian. Although Soto-Morettini's article appeared far too late for it to have any influence on *After Brecht*, it does point out that the adoption of Brechtian devices does not necessarily equal Brechtian historicization.

Indeed, the most important question that *After Brecht* poses is this: how far can an epic playwright move from Brecht's Marxism and still remain "Brechtian"? Reinelt is right to observe: "Bourgeois critics have often tried to separate Marxist politics from epic aesthetics, treating the A-effect, social gestus, and other epic features as formalistic structures. It won't work" (84). At the same time, it is important to ask what the movement from Marx to Foucault, in Churchill's *Softcops*, portends for the Brechtian tradition, or what is really involved ideologically in *In the Company of Men*, which is described as "perhaps what Beckett might have looked like with the politics added" (71). In such passages as these, Reinelt seems to be straining the limits of Brechtianism, perhaps being too generous to deny works she admires a secure place within the Brechtian tradition. In the case of David Hare's most recent plays, however, she defines them as admirable, though definitely not Brechtian.

After Brecht is most satisfying, not in its theoretical passages, but in its careful interpretations of playtexts. Its readings of *The Genius*, *The War Plays*, *Fanshen*, *Plenty*, and the works of Trevor Griffiths are immensely useful, and insure it a place on every student of contemporary English drama's bookshelf. In its organization by playwright, its fondness for the uniqueness of individual texts, and its tendency to subordinate historical and theoretical questions to dramatic appreciation, *After Brecht* hearkens back to works like John Russell Taylor's *Anger and After* and Andrew Kennedy's *Six Dramatists in Search of a Language*, even while it tries to assimilate theoretical insights into its fundamentally conservative structure. Critics will appreciate many of Reinelt's insights, even when they feel the need to question her methodological assumptions.

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French Women Playwrights Before the Twentieth Century: A Checklist. Compiled by Cecilia Beach. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

For her essay on "Women and the Theatre Arts" in *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment* (Samia I. Spencer, ed. Indiana University Press, 1994), Barbara Mittman scoured a number of sources to come up with a list of fifteen women who had plays produced on the public stage in Paris during the eighteenth century. It is a measure of Cecilia Beach's contribution to scholarship that her book includes 45 women who meet the same criteria. Indeed, Beach's section on the eighteenth century provides a total of eighty names, the others having had their plays produced outside Paris or published but not produced. Amazingly, nine

of the women on Beach's list had plays presented at what was already a bastion of tradition, the Comédie-Française.

French Women Playwrights before the Twentieth Century brings together biographical information and data on first performances and publication of plays written in French by women in the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. The enormity of the task is evident in the number of different names by which any one woman might be identified: maiden name, married name(s) and sometimes titles, and pen-name(s). Thus, for example, Amélie-Julie Candeille's life and works had to be traced through the following variants: Mme Nicolas Delaroche, then Mme Simons, and later Mme Périé de Senonvert (also listed as Simons-Candeille and Périé-Candeille). One might infer from her third married name that Candeille moved up in the world. The biographical data provides her dates, 1767-1834, and tells us that she was a "musician (singer, pianist, composer); actress at the Comédie Française until 1790, then at the Théâtre des Variétés du Palais-Royal; novelist, essayist; school teacher (1803-1813)" (17). That example is, however, as extensive a biographical note as one finds in the book. Many are tantalizingly brief, like the one for the comtesse de Saint-Balmont (1607-1660): "Known for her military exploits" (11).

The listings of play titles identify each work by genre, number of acts, whether it is in prose or verse, names of co-authors or composer (if any), place and date of publication, place and date of first performance, and present-day Paris location (with call numbers) of a manuscript or published version of the play. While such a bibliography admittedly makes dry reading, it can yield interesting patterns of activity. One quickly realizes, for example, that a significant proportion of the 19th-century women dramatists were writing plays for children and young people, whereas the eighteenth century boasted only one such writer, the comtesse de Genlis.

The very titles of the plays hint not only at what was popular at the time, but perhaps also at what interested the author. For example, what can we make of the fact that Mme Emile de Girardin wrote plays titled *C'est la faute du mari* (*It's the Husband's Shortcoming*) and *Une Femme qui déteste son mari* (*A Woman Who Hates Her Husband*)? The index of titles leads to the discovery that the seven play titles beginning with the word "death" (*mort*) range in dates from 1655 to 1885 (two in the seventeenth century, three in the eighteenth, and two in the nineteenth), whereas play titles beginning with the word "mother" (*mère*) do not appear at all before the 1780s (two of the seven are late eighteenth century and the rest are mid- to late nineteenth century).

To give a sense of the steady increase and abundance of French women's writing for the theatre, I counted the names in each section. Three women (all aristocrats) represent the sixteenth century, seventeen in the seventeenth century, eighty in the eighteenth century (about half of them aristocrats and fourteen by my count having professional theatre connections), and 344 in the nineteenth century. Beach notes in her preface that she is preparing a companion volume on French women playwrights of the twentieth century.

As a reference work, Beach's book is invaluable and should stimulate a wealth of scholarship in an area that has been quite neglected. The entries appear to have been recorded with meticulous care—not an accent mark out of place! The five-page preface, by contrast, is somewhat clumsily written (grammar errors, awkward sentences, lack of substance apart from the explanation of the book's scope and plan). A French verb (*ignorer*, meaning "not to know") creeps into the English with amusing effect: "I am still hopeful that I will some day find a number of the plays not yet located and others whose very existence I ignore to date" (xii). It would have been helpful if Beach had explained some of the relatively obscure genres to which she refers. To find a definition of an eighteenth-century theatrical genre known as *à propos*, I had to go back to the earliest edition of the multivolume Larousse in my university library: "*pièce de théâtre, poème de circonstance: jouer un à propos en un acte.*" Other terms—including *bluette* (*petit ouvrage d'esprit sans importance, mais finement écrit*) and *saynète* (*En France courte pièce dont le sujet est généralement anodin ou superficiel et qui ne comporte que quelques scènes et peu de personnages*)—are both carried over into the most recent edition of the Larousse.

For those who crave a closer acquaintance with some of the women in Beach's book, an excellent first step would be *The Lunatic Lover and Other Plays by French Women of the 17th & 18th Centuries*, edited by Perry Gethner (Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 1994), an anthology of six plays in English translation, each with a substantial introduction.

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