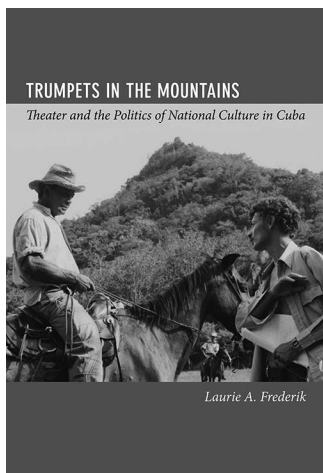


# Books



***Trumpets in the Mountains: Theater and the Politics of National Culture in Cuba.*** By Laurie A. Frederik. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012; 360 pp.; illustrations. \$94.95 cloth, \$25.95 paper.

***Cuba Inside Out: Revolution and Contemporary Theatre.*** By Yael Prizant. Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 2014; 192 pp.; illustrations. \$40.00 paper.

Despite ongoing difficulties of conducting research in Cuba, US scholars Laurie A. Frederik and Yael Prizant have recently produced much-needed works on Cuban theatre of the post-Soviet era. Most significantly, these are the first book-length projects in English on theatre and performance during Cuba's *el período especial en tiempos de paz* (Special Period in Times of Peace)—the official name given by Fidel Castro in August 1990 to mark the beginning of the economic crisis that resulted from the col-

lapse of the Soviet Union. The direst years were from 1990 to 1995 although it was still in “full force” in 1997 when Frederik began her ethnographic research. She describes the “daily black-outs and lengthy queues to buy bread, milk, and cooking oil, and the endless waits for buses impossibly stuffed with sweaty bodies” (3). By the mid-2000s, when Frederik concluded the bulk of her research in the isolated, rural *zonas de silencio* (zones of silence) and Prizant began fieldwork in Havana, the Special Period had entered what some call its “late” phase (see Berg 2004; Babb 2011). While today there is an argument to be made that the national crisis is largely over in light of economic reforms put in place by Raúl Castro, the Cuban government has not yet officially declared an end to *el período especial*.<sup>1</sup>

*Trumpets in the Mountains* and *Cuba Inside Out* are part of a growing body of work on the Special Period, most of which employs anthropological and ethnographic methods.<sup>2</sup> Other recent publications on Cuban performance are written from broadly historical and diasporic perspectives and do not concern Special Period Cuba as do the works under review.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, what *Trumpets in the Mountains* and *Cuba Inside Out* share is a refusal to produce a generic “Cuban” or “Afro-Cuban” culture that spans large timeframes and distances. Instead, they each look closely at smaller samples of contemporary material in order to question the production of a homogenous *Cubanía* within the context of changing national politics in post-Soviet Cuba.

While Frederik and Prizant both investigate contemporary Cuban theatre and its role in changing national culture, they do so in strikingly different ways. Frederik's project is a

1. For a review of recent reforms, see Carmelo Mesa-Lago et al. (2013). Hurricane damage in 2008 and again in 2012 also resulted in significant economic hardship.
2. See for example Nadine T. Fernandez (2010); Ariana Hernandez-Reguant (2009); Elise Andaya (2014); Noelle M. Stout (2014).
3. See for example Alejandro L. Madrid and Robin D. Moore (2013); and Antonio Lopez (2012).

“meta-ethnography” of the ethnographic performance practices of rural *Teatro Comunitario* (Communitarian Theatre) groups while Prizant focuses on the dramatic literature of select playwrights in major urban centers (Havana, Los Angeles, New York); Prizant’s primary sources are predominantly textual while Frederik’s are rehearsals, performances, the creative process, and audience uptake.

*Trumpets in the Mountains* is a theoretically savvy study of the ways that Teatro Comunitario groups of the Special Period have navigated economic crisis and the shifting terrain of revolutionary nationalism while making collaborative theatre in isolated, rural areas of Cuba. The first chapter provides background on the Cuban Revolution, the concept of *el Nuevo Hombre* (New Man), and early revolutionary theatre known as *Teatro Nuevo* (1968 to mid-1980s). From this, Frederik develops the concept of *el Hombre Novísimo* (Even Newer Man) of the Special Period and documents the role of rural community theatre in conversations about Cuban national identity in the context of crisis. Chapters 3 and 4 detail the lengthy creative process used by Teatro de los Elementos to develop the play *Ten mi nombre como un sueño* (Remember my name, as if it were a dream; 1999)<sup>4</sup> with community members in Cumanayagua, Cienfuegos Province. These chapters are a tour de force that tell a compelling story of erased history (the flooding of the town of Sigüanea) and describe in detail various phases of the creative process in an original, devised performance.

*Trumpets* makes several substantial contributions: it is the first book-length analysis of Teatro Comunitario in Cuba; the development of the idea of *el Hombre Novísimo* and the discussion of Janus-faced nationalism are particularly generative; and the analysis of the creative process of devised theatre in contemporary Cuba documents some of the best practices in performance as research because her methodology includes not only performance ethnography (a study of a theatre group’s performance-making process) but also her own participation in that performance process. Namely, in working with Teatro de los Elementos, Frederik helped to devise *Ten mi nombre como un sueño* as the group’s acknowledged *antropóloga* (142). The book includes three maps that geographically locate the Teatro Comunitario groups; one also traces the author’s route with one of those groups, la Cruzada Teatral, through Guantánamo Province in 2000. Sixteen black-and-white figures, primarily photographs taken by the author during rehearsals and performances, are useful for situating the analysis. The notes and index are thorough and a useful glossary defines key theoretical and Spanish-language terms. The Sources Cited is organized into sections by newspapers and journals, Cuban essays, formal interviews conducted between 1997 and 2006, and secondary sources. This is tremendously helpful for others wishing to build on Frederik’s impressive scholarship.

Prizant’s *Cuba Inside Out* is likewise the only book-length study of contemporary Cuban and Cuban American plays. It examines seven plays, each of which “reconsiders the Cuban Revolution” (3) and its ongoing redefinition from within the context of crisis and globalization as outlined in the book’s introduction. In the second chapter, Prizant examines two Cuban plays that depict the aftermath of the French Revolution precisely in order to rethink the nature of revolution in post-Soviet Cuba: *Charenton* (2006) by Raquel Carrió and Flora Lauten (an adaptation of Peter Weiss’s *Marat/Sade*); and Nara Mansur’s *Carlotta Corday* (2001), a poetic monologue about the historical woman who killed Marat that also draws from Weiss’s play. Chapter 3 analyzes two Cuban plays that are set in the context of the Special Period. In each, the characters are torn from or crash into each other through the workings of globalization. In Miguel Terry’s *Laberinto de lobos* (Labyrinth of Wolves; 1993), foreigners and *jineteras* (slang for sex workers in Cuba, literally “horse riders”) negotiate strained economic, romantic, and geographic relations; while in Mansur’s *Ignacio y Maria* (2003), two lovers are separated by “economic circumstances” (74)—Ignacio in Chile and Maria in Cuba. Prizant’s fourth chapter explores

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4. Frederik’s translation of the title (122).

two English-language plays by Cuban Americans: Rogelio Martínez's *Illuminating Veronica* (2000) and Nilo Cruz's *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* (2004), which takes place in 1998 Havana. The concluding chapter discusses the only piece not written during the Special Period: Reinaldo Arenas's *Traidor/Traitor* (1986), which nonetheless considers Cuba's postrevolutionary future.

Prizant is at her best when engaging in close readings of the plays and the productions she has seen; and the book is most useful in exposing English-speaking audiences to analyses of the five Spanish-language plays. Its focus is primarily (and rightly) on the plays written and produced in Cuba within the context of globalization, yet the inclusion of plays by Cuban American playwrights and other similar gestures help to underscore the inside-out positioning that is marked in the book's title. For example, her reading of Nara Mansur's *Ignacio and Maria* draws not only from textual analysis but also from productions in both Los Angeles (2003) and Havana (2009), thus tracing the production of a Cuban play "inside out" and across the divide of embargo. One small, yet noteworthy, limitation is that while the analyses in chapter 1 of *Charenton* and *Carlotta Corday* astutely connect the Cuban Revolution to the French, Mexican, and Russian Revolutions, they omit the Haitian Revolution despite the addition of two new characters to Carrió and Lauten's adaptation of *Marat/Sade*, Actor-Toussaint and Actor-L'Ouverture, who specifically refer to the historical leader, Toussaint L'Ouverture (49).<sup>5</sup>

*Cuba Inside Out* includes a centerfold gallery of glossy color reproductions of 22 photographs by visual artist Christopher Stackowicz. They seem, however, to produce a kind of embargo exoticism; some are of theatre buildings in Havana, but the majority of the color-saturated images look more like postcards from urban tourist areas, right down to the token image of two young girls who the caption suggests are prostitutes or hustlers and another of a street vendor with a colorful fruit cart. There are no photographs of any of the performances seen by the author and while there is one image of a group of boys dancing, it has nothing to do with the plays under discussion. The images are supplemental: because they are largely disconnected from the analysis and due to their subject matter, they run the risk of reinscribing stereotypical images of colorful Cuban culture on one hand and scarcity, decay, and prostitution on the other. This is problematic given the history and politics of representations of Cuba in the US. The notes, index, and bibliography are highly condensed and will be most useful for undergraduate students; perhaps due to publishing constraints, they lack useful details on the productions and interviews that constituted part of the author's research. Despite these limitations, the book fills a substantial gap in the existing literature.

Given the contemporary historical focus and diverse geographical locations and methodologies, both *Trumpets in the Mountains* and *Cuba Inside Out* offer much-needed contributions to the very small body of contemporary book-length, English-language scholarship on Cuban theatre, namely Jill Lane's work on *teatro bufo* and blackface in the 19th century (2005) and Susan Thomas's study of *zarzuela* on the early 20th-century Havana stage (2009). The combined timelines and diverse cultural geographies of these two works come together nicely to provide a wide view of post-Soviet Cuba.

—Shannon Rose Riley

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5. Numerous scholars have documented the influence of the Haitian Revolution on Cuba and the US. For example, see David Patrick Geggus, ed. (2001); Alfred N. Hunt (1988); and Sibylle Fischer (2004).

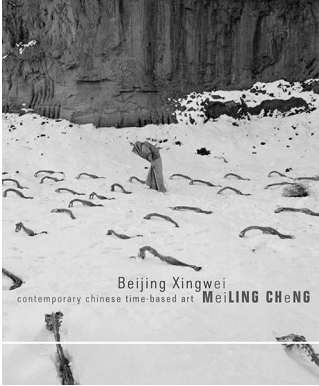
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***Beijing Xingwei: Contemporary Chinese Time-Based Art.*** By Meiling Cheng.  
Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2013; 510 pp.; illustrations. \$40.00 paper.

Meiling Cheng's *Beijing Xingwei: Contemporary Chinese Time-Based Art* unfurls as both a significant scholarly undertaking and a deeply personal journey. Deftly intertwining analytical insights with elegiac interludes, Cheng tracks the effects of impermanence and accumulated time on artists, artworks, sites, and audience members—including herself. As author, she is particularly sensitive to her dual roles as receiver and interpreter. This is aptly demonstrated in Cheng's titular use of *xingwei* (behavior). On the one hand, the term serves as a shorthand reference to the kinds of artwork under consideration. That is, when *xingwei* is paired with the characters *yishu* (art) and *zhuangzhi* (installation), it refers to how "performance art" and "performative installation" are commonly used in Chinese. On the other hand, in only using "xingwei" and excising *yishu* and *zhuangzhi* from the title, the author invokes the literal translation of this phrase when presented singularly: "behavior." By encompassing both "performance art" and "behavior," Cheng makes layered references to how time operates. In terms of "behavior," she connotes



both the context of habits and ethics through which she examines artwork as well as her own “scholarly behavior” in encountering and re-reading the works over time. In these multiple evocations of time, *Beijing Xingwei* not only tracks a web of radical durational art, but also unfolds as a matrix of the author’s experiments with language, interpretation, and critique. Indeed, Cheng posits *Beijing Xingwei* as a time-based work of art in its own right.

While the author puts forward a large corpus of concepts and neologisms throughout her book, “multicentricity” emerges as the guiding epistemology and methodology. She argues for the coexistence of multiple centers and the “fundamental inadequacy of any one” (xxii). In addition to her application of this framework to a number of broad contexts—geographical, biological, thematic, temporal, and perceptual to name a few—she also practices this as a mode of subjectivity. Cheng elegantly presents her own multicentricity in the preface where she traces autobiographical arcs—replete with embedded ideas, changing attitudes, candid accounts, and surfaced memories—that mark her journey to and through *Beijing Xingwei*.

As a multicentric author, Cheng feints and parries between “self-affirmation and self-critique” (26). This process is most revelatory when she confronts her uneasiness and, in some cases, disgust towards particular works. She reflects thoughtfully on her scholarly coverage and wrestles over moral thresholds and obligations: does her acknowledgment of a morally reprehensible artwork further validate its existence? Cheng relays her discomfort towards a particularly cruel performance by Zhu Yu that was so horrific that in an essay for *TDR* (“Violent Capital: Zhu Yu on File,” *TDR* 49:3 [T187, 2005]), she avoided discussing it as a form of protest. But, in relaying how she has come to live with this performance over time—both through the knowledge of the artwork and the work of writing the book itself—she allows it to come to light alongside her own apparent abhorrence: “These two pieces make me weep and force me to take a stand” (163). We witness as she grapples with her tolerance and repulsion, and finally comes to the conclusion that: “For me, art stops when exploitation of the weak begins” (167). Such self-reflexive critique opens up important space for readers to move beyond dispassionate observation into serious ruminations on the limits of art and ethics, consumerism and society, and ambition and theology.

By the author’s own account, nearly half of the works in the study fall into this particularly brutal strain of contemporary art in China, which has gained notoriety for its use of cadavers, fetuses, self-cruelty, and animal sacrifice. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 center largely on these kinds of works, but each chapter offers a specific set of concepts as foci while also following different multicentric narratives. Chapter 2, for example, begins and ends with Zhu Yu. In between, Cheng traces distinct temporal arcs from the technological afterlife of the artist’s work to earlier precedents for body-based performances. In the next chapter, Cheng continues with well-known examples from the “cadaver school” such as Qin Ga’s *Bingdong* (Freeze; 2000), as well as Sun Yuan and Peng Yu’s *Ren You* (Human Oil; 2000) and *Lianti* (Linked Bodies; 2000). In addressing the relationship between art and the limits of mortality, Cheng questions the incorporation of death in what she reminds us is “time-based (live) art” (216). She adopts the lens of “limit zones” to expand this discussion beyond birth and death, broaching ethical limits and realms of the unknown. In this way, she forges intriguing comparisons with performances by Zhang Huan and He Yunchang through references to Confucian ethics.

Even as Cheng explores generational and genealogical contexts, she eschews chronological sequencing both within each chapter and across the book as a whole. Instead, to organize her chapters, Cheng coins the terms “bodyworks; animalworks; consumableworks;

documentaryworks” (37). These speak to not only the variety of materials and conditions she examines, but also her search for new ways of addressing these works. In her discussion of animalworks in chapter 4, the author employs the overarching concept of zooësis to discuss human-animal relationships. This leads to interesting stopovers in documentary photography, animal husbandry, and cultural concerns around food. While her final chapters move away from brutal bodyworks and animalworks, her turn to issues of consumerism suggests reversals, returns, and reconsiderations of earlier themes of capital and consumption.

True to a multicentric approach to time, Cheng’s chapters proceed along dynamic, nonlinear paths in order to afford multiple angles of interpretation and reinterpretation. In spite of this resistance to centering, each individual analysis of a work remains focused and interestingly contextualized. Cheng’s neologicistic ideograms, poetic prose, and creative concepts elasticize time to open up spaces for conversation, interrogation, and reflexivity. Given the powerful visual nature of the works that Cheng explores, *Beijing Xingwei* is gratifyingly illustrated with more than 100 color plates interspersed throughout the book. She ends the book fittingly with a short address of Ai Weiwei’s incarceration. Ever aware that situations are constantly changing, she acknowledges how these perceptions of the past and present are subject to revision given the relentless flight of the contemporary.

—Peggy Wang

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***Black Performance Theory.*** Edited by Thomas F. DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014; 296 pp.; illustrations. \$24.95 paper.

This is theory that dances.

*Black Performance Theory* convenes 14 scholars and practitioners of Africana performance and bids them dance and groove across national, hemispheric, oceanic, planetary, disciplinary, epochal, formal, and methodological boundaries in pursuit of blackness in motion. Coedited by Thomas F. DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez—both dancer-scholars, fittingly enough—the volume takes up such varied objects and events as scripted theatre, popular music, minstrelsy, fiction, painting, ecstatic dance, tableau vivant, urban ambulation, and broader phenomena like identity, diaspora, and discourse. Posited as such a heterogeneous assemblage, it is no wonder that black performance is a site of generative tension and friction. As the editors remark, “performance may be resistant or affirmative, or several states in-between and simultaneously” and may “allow for subversive and normative simultaneity: cross-rhythms of rupture and coherence” (10). Guided by these “cross-rhythms,” the collection deftly spans manifold black hues in the “broad spectrum” (Schechner 1988:4) of performance. What results is a marvelously capacious contribution to critical black/performance studies.



The book is a project of the Black Performance Theory Working Group—an interdisciplinary community of academics and artists who assemble for biennial colloquia. As the editors elaborate in their introduction, “Black performance theory came into being as a ‘think tank’ about black performance at a moment when blackness had been successfully deconstructed as a social and literary category without fixed contents. And yet black performance remained a palpable aspect of being in the world” (7). Blackness itself is a supple formation that shifts and stretches to contain countless modes of being—but does not collapse or burst in the process. As the anthology bears out, blackness and black performance defiantly persist.

On one register, the title *Black Performance Theory* straightforwardly signifies theory *about* performance. However, the volume also highlights theory *as* performance, and complementarily, performance *as* theory. Theory as performance manifests in the book’s plenitude of performative writing. In their introduction, for example, DeFrantz and Gonzalez do not merely report on divergent notions of “blackness” within black cultural studies circles; they actually stage a dialogue/debate that is transcribed in the manner of script lines. Meanwhile, performance as theory is a perennial feature of many Africana cultures, where practices like dance, drum work, gesticulation, beatboxing, vocal melisma, or lovemaking are understood to be sensual *and* critical, performative *and* theoretical. More broadly, as Gonzalez emphasizes in the introduction, “performance theory can be delivered through a hand gesture [...] embedded in a lecture, or disseminated within the pauses of a sound score” (7).

Preceded by D. Soyini Madison’s field-appraising foreword and the editors’ performative introduction, the collection’s 14 essays are grouped into four thematic sections. The first of these sections, “Transporting Black,” theorizes black diaspora via transnational, transatlantic, transhuman, transhistorical, and intergalactic performances. Anita Gonzalez’s opening essay examines blackface routines performed by 19th-century Irish and contemporary Mesoamerican minstrels. Gonzalez reveals how such performers degrade blacks in order to elevate themselves; indeed, they treat blackness as a fungible mass of abjection upon which they can prop and scaffold their own tenuous social standings. Nadine George-Graves’s essay forwards a theory of diasporic “spidering” (36) to describe the spreading, crisscrossing, tangled, unstable, sticky quality of identity and subjectivity across diaspora. Contemplating John Jennings’s Afrofuturist visual art, Hershini Bhana Young models a sort of critical synesthesia: she listens for the radical resonance in Jennings’s brushstrokes; hears critiques of the human and of consumerism issuing from his cyborg paintings; and generates an account of what post-human visions might sound like. In the final essay of “Transporting Black,” Melissa Blanco Borelli ponders the performance and performativity of the figure of the *mulata* across the Americas since the 19th century. She devotes special attention to “hip work” (63), a metonym for *mulata* women’s corporeal and erotic agency in the face of racial and sexual abjection.

The second section, “Black-En-Scene,” takes up formally staged performance events: theatre, concert dance, and tableau vivant. Koritha Mitchell theorizes what she calls “the theater/lynching alliance” (91–92): the perverse theatricality of public lynching in league with the perverse representational violence of antiblack theatre at the turn of the 20th century. Carl Paris contemplates the presence and function of the “spirit” (99)—a visceral condensation of divine energy and feeling—in the dance of Ronald K. Brown and Reggie Wilson. To close this section, Rickerby Hinds (interviewed by Richard C. Green) describes the creation of his installation of tableaux vivants based on iconic hip hop album covers. In the process, he offers insights on community, commodity, iconicity, legacy, and nostalgia in the life of hip hop.

“Black Imaginary,” the collection’s third section, explores black bodies moving through spaces both “imaginary” and “real,” both physical and metaphysical. Soyica Diggs Colbert reflects on the recurring image of “flying Africans” (129) within slave narratives, Harlem Renaissance writings, the music of Parliament Funkadelic and Kanye West, and most extensively, in Toni Morrison’s novel, *Song of Solomon*. Reading flight as a symbol of death and

freedom, of surrender and transcendence, Colbert plots how black-people-in-flight navigate airspaces choked by antiblackness. For her essay, Wendy S. Walters compiles a series of “notes” (149): a verbal montage of observations and revelations about the pernicious persistence of racism in a supposedly post-racial era. In the final contribution to this section, Anna B. Scott peripatetically ponders race, space, history, teleology, black dance, and interrelations between discourse and embodiment. All the while, she ambles through a cityscape that incites those ruminations.

Essays in the final section, “Hi-Fidelity Black,” take up popular music and its myriad soundscapes. Tavia Nyong’o meditates on the life and work of Little Richard, emphasizing the subversiveness of Richard’s queer, avantgarde, raunchy, rock-music inventions and interventions amid an exploitative pop music industry. Taking up another pop iconoclast, Jason King considers the art and artifice, the big-budget sheen and low-fi roughness, the flashy spectacles and murky specters that merge in Michael Jackson’s posthumous rehearsal/concert film, *This Is It*. Daphne A. Brooks explores the creative and subversive resonance within black women’s performative and discursive polyvocality, taking as her prime case studies the voices that populate Nina Simone’s music and Adrienne Kennedy’s drama. In the volume’s final essay, Thomas F. DeFrantz ruminates on the “power” and “pleasure” (229) evinced in hip hop dance; surveys the global circulation of the art form; and observes the changing complexion and composition of “hip hop corporeality” (255) as it broaches new milieus and marketplaces.

With such a sprawling diversity of subject matters and critical approaches, this anthology might well be called *Black Cultural Studies* or *Black Critical Theory*. That these essays are gathered, instead, under the sign of black *performance* speaks to performance’s capaciousness as category and hermeneutic. A skeptic may wonder whether the category risks becoming so broad and diffuse that it loses analytical precision. To answer such skepticism, we would do well to point to a paradox subtending performance studies. That *performance is everywhere* is both the charge and challenge of performance studies: the condition of its existence *and*, perhaps, a threat to its coherence. Likewise, that *blackness is infinite* is both the charge and challenge of black studies: a truth that galvanizes the field *and* an unwieldiness that resists disciplinary coherency, often for the better. As E. Patrick Johnson elsewhere reminds us, “blackness, like performance, defies categorization” (2003:2).

That likeness exemplifies the countless intersections and interrelations between blackness and performance. After all, blacks in the West bear what José Esteban Muñoz called the “burden of liveness” (1999:182) and what we might more broadly term the “burden of performance.” They have been compelled to *perform* fitness and joviality in coffles and on auction blocks (Hartman 1997:23); to *perform* slave labor on plantations and beyond; to *perform* dissimulation and respectability under the scrutiny of the white gaze; and are especially valued, within neoliberal logics, for commoditized musical and athletic *performance*. All the while, black people have generated the world-making and life-sustaining performance practices illuminated in the volume. It is no wonder that blackness provides a quintessential occasion to think about performance in the West. DeFrantz and Gonzalez’s anthology makes apt use of this opportunity.

Ultimately, then, *Black Performance Theory* accomplishes four crucial tasks: first, it reveals the ubiquity of performance-rooted phenomena in (black) life and culture; second, it showcases the acuity and versatility of performance theory for interpreting (black) life; third, it charts new and continuing directions in black performance studies, black cultural studies, critical race theory, and diaspora studies amid purportedly “post-black” and certainly antiblack social orders; and finally, it serves as a sort of dance lesson, modeling theory in graceful motion.

—La Marr Jurelle Bruce

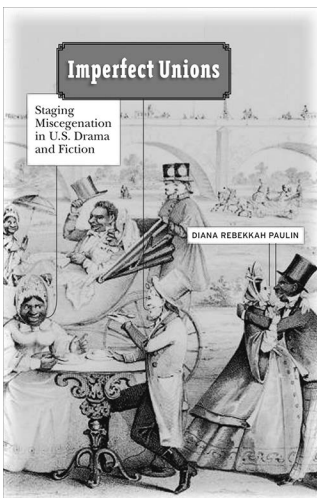


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***Imperfect Unions: Staging Miscegenation in U.S. Drama and Fiction.*** By Diana Rebeccah Paulin. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012; 336 pp.; illustrations. \$75.00 cloth, \$25.00 paper.

*Imperfect Unions* is Diana Rebeccah Paulin's award-winning study of "the symbolic and material implications of interracial unions" in the United States from the Civil War to World War I (3). During this period, interracial sex was often "the black-white headliner that overwrote stories featuring other intersecting relationships," including those of gender and class (xvi). For example: In her 1892 pamphlet *Southern Horrors*, Ida B. Wells demonstrated that black men were lynched in the postbellum South not because they were a sexual threat to white women, but because they were an economic threat to white men. Paulin calls the process through which miscegenation came to stand in for such conflict "demographic distillation" for the way it "elided other types of power relations" (x, xiii). Interpreting drama and fiction to investigate "the contours of the color line,"

Paulin argues that "the black-white encounter overshadows the complex" identities of, and relations between, all Americans, regardless of their race or ethnicity (xi, ix).

Paulin's "miscegenated reading practices" draw on performance studies and literary history to examine formally hybrid productions like Thomas Dixon's play *The Clansman*, which he adapted from his own novel, and Pauline Hopkins's *Winona*, which she began as a play but rewrote as a novel (xiii). If the name Paulin gives to her method is provocative (one may argue how parallel the lines of color and of scholarship are), the method itself is productive. Her approach is consistent with the objects of study, which often make their arguments in theatrical terms—many are filled with spectacular enactments of identity—and with their creators, who worked in multiple media. More than viewing performance as a metaphor, these writers saw their texts as "mediating between the imagined world and the realities of everyday experience" (3): Louisa May Alcott based "M.L." on the well-known case of a black male professor elop-

ing with a white female student (30); Charles Chesnutt sent a copy of *The Marrow of Tradition* to Congress (104); James Weldon Johnson wrote *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* while serving as an American consul to Venezuela and Nicaragua (206).

In the first chapter, “Under the Covers of Forbidden Desire: Interracial Unions as Surrogates,” Paulin shows that miscegenation was viewed as a threat to the family and the nation it represented. In the Civil War era, America was figured as a divided house *and* as a mixed race. The title character of Dion Boucicault’s 1859 play *The Octoroon* embodies and inspires transgression: the other characters respond to her resistance to classification by revolting against their own classes—and races and genders (13, 10). Both of Alcott’s 1863 short stories, “M.L.” and “My Contraband,” feature white women who desire mixed-race men and their own liberation from patriarchal society (32, 44).

In the book’s second chapter, “Clear Definitions for an Anxious World: Late Nineteenth-Century Surrogacy,” Paulin describes how Americans dramatized national issues on an international stage. In the period between Reconstruction and *Plessy v. Ferguson*, they imagined Europe as a place where miscegenation originated or where it could settle and be resolved. The ambiguous racial status of the heroines of Bartley Campbell’s 1882 play *The White Slave* and William Dean Howells’s 1892 novel *An Imperative Duty* are resolved through marriage. In the former, a man declares his granddaughter (fathered by a foreigner and born abroad) to be his slave’s daughter to hide her illegitimate birth; her whiteness and their property are redeemed when she marries her grandfather’s adopted son (70–71). In the latter, a woman who learns that her mother was an octoroon chooses marriage to a white man and emigration to Europe over the cause of black uplift (87).

In chapter 3, “Staging the Unspoken Terror,” Paulin finds that Americans at the turn of the century connected the future of the nation’s government to the issue of miscegenation (102). This is the first chapter to present texts by a black writer and a white writer who take opposing positions, even if they foresee the same outcome: In Chesnutt’s *The Marrow of Tradition*, a white woman is killed (and rumored to have been raped) by a white man in blackface, an event a white mob uses as an excuse to overthrow the town’s biracial government (111). In Dixon’s *The Clansman*, a white politician supports the enfranchisement of freedmen—the first act of whom is to legalize interracial marriage—until his mixed-race associate expresses his desire to marry the politician’s daughter (125–26).

In “The Remix: Afro-Indian Intimacies,” chapter 4, Paulin explores the early New Negro movement’s reconceptualization of race and nation in terms other than black and white/North and South. Native Americans and the West promised African Americans a people with whom they could form bonds and a place where they could settle, independent of, even if under the power of, whites: Hopkins’s 1902 *Winona* features a multiracial family that joins a tribe of Seneca Indians (156). Bob Cole, J. Rosamond Johnson, and James Weldon Johnson’s 1908 musical *The Red Moon* moves between a government school for African Americans and Native Americans in the East and an Indian reservation in the West (169–70).

In the fifth and final chapter, “The Futurity of Miscegenation,” Paulin reviews responses to the proposed divorce of the races that was advocated by black separatists and white supremacists alike in the lead up to World War I. This is the only chapter to address two non-theatrical texts, both of which are manifold in form and content: in generically indeterminable texts, Hopkins and James Weldon Johnson conclude that race itself is indeterminable. They propose that only a “transnational and diasporic” conception of race could offer a future “aware of” but “not defined by” its past (188, 227): Hopkins’s 1902–1903 novel *Of One Blood* turns to Africa to discover that races were hybrid long before they were “pure” (195). Johnson’s 1912 novel *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* lets the reader, who is not definitively raced, pass with its narrator through Europe and the United States (211).

A half-century each of literature and scholarship demonstrate that “moving beyond the black-white binary is incredibly difficult” (238). Even a critique of such reductive thinking may “reproduc[e]” it (xvii). *Imperfect Unions* offers an analytical history of efforts to define the “problem” of miscegenation. In explaining the consequences of “the limited language we have for talking about the complexity of identity,” Paulin provides a model for how we might do it better (239).

—Alex W. Black

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***Animal Acts: Performing Species Today.*** Edited by Una Chaudhuri and Holly Hughes. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014; 254 pp.; illustrations. \$90.00 cloth, \$35.00 paper, e-book available.

The past several years have seen what might be called “the animal turn” in the humanities and social sciences, Una Chaudhuri notes in her introduction to *Animal Acts: Performing Species Today* (1). It has been over 30 years since the publication of such foundational texts as John Berger’s “Why Look at Animals?” (1980) and Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation* (1975), and critical animal studies is more relevant than ever. Developed concurrently with activist movements for animal welfare and the ethical treatment of animals, the interdisciplinary field of critical animal studies is significant because it examines interspecies relationality at a moment when awareness of ecological crisis is heightened. However, although critical animal studies has from its beginnings approached the figure of the animal

through numerous disciplinary lenses—including philosophy, anthropology, literature, and cultural studies—only in the past decade has it come to include the work of theatre and performance scholars. Chaudhuri, in particular, has been a key contributor to this area of research, publishing numerous articles on the subject and guest-editing *TDR*’s special issue on “Animals and Performance” in 2007. Through their selection of performances and scholarly commentary, Chaudhuri and fellow *Animal Acts* editor Holly Hughes demonstrate that theatre and performance studies offers a unique contribution to the current “animal turn.” The collection draws readers’ attention to the multiple resonances of the verb “to act” as it includes performance texts that by turns act on behalf of animals, represent animals mimetically, and enact possible futures for interspecies relationships. *Animal Acts* shows that interspecies performances hold the power to change not only the way we see and interact with non-human animals, but also the way we understand ourselves.

It should be emphasized that *Animal Acts* is not a collection of essays about the intersection of performance studies and animal studies. Rather, it is a collection of performance texts by solo performers—including Rachel Rosenthal, Deke Weaver, and Jess Dobkin—with accompanying commentary by scholars such as Jill Dolan, Ann Pellegrini, and Cary Wolfe. One of the most successful aspects of this collection is the way it highlights embodied perfor-

mance: prioritizing performance texts by offering scholarly commentary in a supplementary position. The book includes a link to the University of Michigan Press's website where readers can find video excerpts of many of the performances. This supplement gives a taste of the diversity of live events represented in the collection and reminds readers that the published texts are a documentation of embodied performances. Furthermore, the scholarly commentaries, which range from personal reflection to historical contextualization and performance analysis, follow the performance texts as opposed to introducing them. This foregrounding of the performance text valorizes the contributions that performance artists offer, rather than allowing discursive intervention to be attributed solely to the work of scholars. One such pairing is that of Holly Hughes's *The Dog and Pony Show (bring your own pony)* (2010) with commentary by Donna Haraway. Haraway has made her own important contributions to the field of animal studies, yet here she provides a more personal reflection, taking up Hughes's phrase "Dogs made us" (29) to explore her own relationship to animals and, more specifically, the experience she shares with Hughes of running with her dogs at agility trials. In relating her experience, Haraway offers the helpful phrase "*becoming-with*" (32) to describe the cofashioning of self that the dog and human partnership performs. Haraway's commentary on Hughes's performance provides one of the most successful of the performer-scholar pairings in the book because of the way it similarly *performs with* Hughes's performance text, offering scholarly commentary alongside personal reflection.

*Animal Acts* is not a book about interspecies performance of the sort involving animals performing alongside human performance (as in the circus). In fact, with only one exception, none of the performances have animal performers. As Chaudhuri writes, "animal presence—in performance as in cultural life—is a *continuum* rather than an absolute" (7). Some of the most powerful performance moments come as a result of the absent presence of other animals in relation to the embodied presence of humans. In Kim Marra's performance text, *Horseback Views: A Queer Hippological Performance*, Marra presents her own body as one that has been physically marked by her relationship with horses. Her body stands in for the absent horse, which is further represented by a well-worn saddle, imprinted with the sweat of the horse in the saddle leather over years of use. The reader thereby understands a level of intimacy in the performer's interspecies relationship with her horse through the traces left by the interaction of human and animal.

The performance texts of *Animal Acts* reveal just as much about humans as they do about animals. Regarding Kestutis Nakas's *No Bees for Bridgeport: A Fable from the Age of Daley*, commentator Joshua Takano Chambers-Letson argues that the bees demonstrate the power of "the multitude" in a group of politically activated humans (108). Hughes and Marra reveal much about their very human understanding of death, belonging, intimacy, and embodiment through their relationships with their animal partners. However, Chambers-Letson also warns against the animal becoming "a screen upon which we [...] can project the exigencies of human political and social being" (106). Even *Animal Acts* cannot completely avoid the impulse: in Carmelita Tropicana's *With What Ass Does the Cockroach Sit?* the cockroach protagonist of the story arguably functions as a metaphor for immigrants in the story of Elián Gonzalez's 1999 departure from Cuba. Nevertheless, *Animal Acts* takes great pains to ask its readers to always consider the specificity of the animal, as opposed to treating animals as a metaphor for the human condition.

*Animal Acts* demonstrates that the embodied performance of human actors holds the capacity to offer profound insight into the animal experience. It also asks readers to attend to the ways in which our understanding and treatment of humans depends on our understanding and treatment of (other) animals. *Animal Acts* demonstrates the ways in which performance can be a space to imagine and enact possible futures and, in this case, alternative interspecies relationships. Scholars and students alike will find this collection a welcome contribution to the fields of animal and performance studies and their unique overlap.

—Catherine Ming T'ien Duffly

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# More Books

## ***The Freak-garde: Extraordinary Bodies and Revolutionary Art in America.***

By Robin Blyn. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013; 328 pp.; illustrations. \$82.50 cloth, \$27.50 paper, e-book available.

In *The Freak-garde*, Robin Blyn traces an evolving lineage of the freak show from P.T. Barnum to Matthew Barney, examining the works of a diverse group of artists that includes Mark Twain, Lon Chaney, Djuna Barnes, Nathanael West, and Diane Arbus. By reading their work together, Blyn proposes a uniquely American "art of dissent"—the "freak-garde"—that "defies the Eurocentric and rationalist theories of avant-gardism that still pervade this field" (xi). The book interrogates the ways in which the freak-garde appropriates a once blatantly capitalist form to critique capitalism from within.

***Taking It to the Bridge: Music as Performance.*** Edited by Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013; 400 pp. \$95.00 cloth, \$35.00 paper, e-book available.

*Taking It to the Bridge* is an excellent primer in the current dialogue between musicology and performance studies. Born from the Music as Performance working group of Performance Studies international, the book reflects musicology's recent explorations of popular music performance as well as performance studies' incorporation of textual analysis of musical scores into its own methodologies. As the editors assert, the "interdisciplinary performance studies approach helps to clarify *what* performances mean" while "more empirical [musicological] approaches help to clarify *how* performances mean what they mean" (15). Seventeen scholars explore music as performance through subjects as varied as liveness and mediatization in concert films (Susan Fast and Jason King, respectively), improvisation and ornamentation in jazz and Italian opera (Philip Auslander and Philip Gossett, respectively), ethnographic examinations of jazz funerals (Joseph Roach), and musical performance in virtual realms (Roger Moseley and David Borgo).

***Stanislavsky: A Life in Letters.*** Selected, translated, and edited by Laurence Senelick. New York: Routledge, 2014; 656 pp.; illustrations. \$170.00 cloth, \$39.95 paper, e-book available.

In *Stanislavsky: A Life In Letters*, renowned Russian theatre scholar Laurence Senelick culls Konstantin Stanislavsky's voluminous correspondence to compile the most complete collection of his letters in any language other than Russian. This epistolary volume traces Stanislavsky's life from his earliest extant letter to his family at age 11 through the heyday of the Moscow Art Theatre and his experiments as an actor, director, and teacher in search of a new kind of truth onstage. The collection also catalogues Stanislavsky's later years living under Soviet rule and concludes with several short notes written just before his death. Fully illustrated, Senelick's book shines new light on the Russian master's meticulous process of self-observation and the lives and works of his inner circle of colleagues and friends.

***Stages of Life: Indian Theatre Autobiographies.*** By Kathryn Hansen. New York: Anthem Press; 392 pp.; illustrations. \$40.00 paper, e-book available.

Kathryn Hansen translates into English for the first time the autobiographies of four celebrated figures of the late-19th- and early-20th-century Parsi theatre of northern India. In addition to providing a window into India's vibrant late-colonial theatrical culture, Hansen also makes a larger argument for the theatrical memoir as a distinct genre and discusses "the ways in which theatrical memoirs constitute archives for examining histories of cultural formation, theatrical practice and oral performance" (xii–xiii). The book is illustrated with photographs and images of theatrical ephemera and incorporates extensive resources for understanding the larger cultural context of the autobiographies, including footnotes glossing allusions and puns, an appendix of plays and films, and a glossary of Hindi and Urdu terms.

—Dana Tanner-Kennedy

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